FARMING IT

HENRY A. SHUTE

J. K. Shaw

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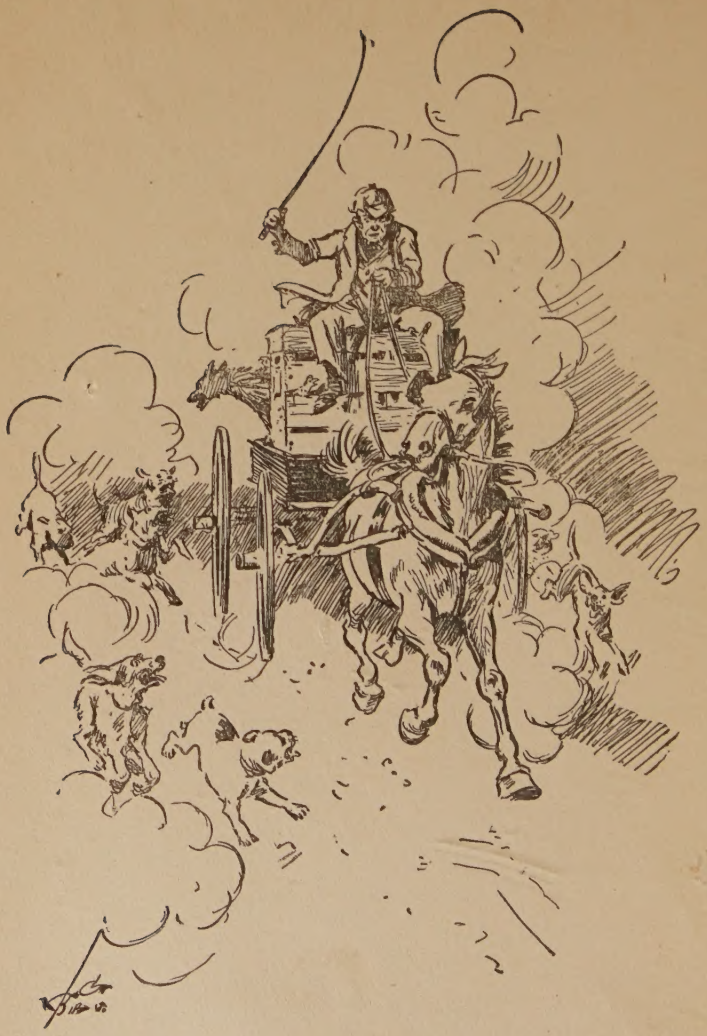

AMID A CLOUD OF DUST CAME THE OLD WHITE MARE

FARMING IT

BY

HENRY A. SHUTE

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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I dedicate this book to my good friend

ELLERY SEDGWICK

who as a sort of literary farmer has cut down and destroyed a great many of my weeds, but not all, as this book shows.

HENRY A. SHUTE

PREFACE

Of the propriety of submitting this book to the public I have had very serious doubts. The nature-books of recent years have certainly been a strong incentive to out-of-door life, to healthful and clean living as near to nature as possible.

And it seemed to me that any recital of actual experiences that might possibly deter a person seeking country life as a means of pecuniary profit, from taking the plunge, might perhaps be injudicious.

But the more I considered the matter the more I became convinced that the representations of the beautifully illustrated nature-magazines, the seductive stories in Sunday paper supplements, farm and garden pamphlets, seed catalogues, poultry periodicals, pigeon monthlies, and like literature, were a trifle overdrawn, and only too often had the effect of luring the unwary city dweller to forsake the undeniable luxuries and comforts of city life, for the hard, and often, at first, unremunerative labor on a farm.

For many city-bred people have become convinced that the path to riches, luxury, and comfort is by way of mushrooms cultivated in an old bureau or in a barn-cellar; that a solid bank ac-

count is the sure and proximate result of "raising squabs for profit"; that a safe-deposit box is a vital necessity after a year with one thousand hens.

But the cultivation of mushrooms by any persons other than experts is too often attended with loss of life in horrible agony on the part of those purchasers relying on the quality of the goods; squabs "go light," and pigeons do not always breed; and without experienced and constant care, a package of insect powder, a chattel mortgage, or the services of an auctioneer are of much more importance and a far greater necessity after a year with a thousand hens, than a safe-deposit box.

There is a "Jabberwock with eyes of flame" lying in wait for every product of the farm and garden, but in that I think lies one of the charms of farming. Crops that will thrive without cultivation are not very desirable. It is much better fun to catch pickerel and trout than eels or pout, although the baser fish are just as good to eat. A boy of ten will throw back with disgust a six-pound sucker he has caught, but will fancy himself a Crœsus when, after unheard-of climbing and walking and wading and sweating and mosquito-biting, he returns with a small string of wary perch weighing four ounces each.

The same care and the same amount of work

that will produce success in other lines of usefulness will, I believe, lead to success on a farm. More than this, I do not believe there can be a healthier life or a pleasanter than the life of a person interested in country life or nature on a farm, whether he farms as an amateur, with an income from a profession or a trade, or as a farmer from love of the life.

And I trust that this book may be useful in tempting many back to the soil, prepared for hard work, without which no success is worth the name.

HENRY A. SHUTE.

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FARMING IT

CHAPTER I

THE DOCTOR PRESCRIBES

FROM my youth I had been designed by my ambitious and autocratic father for the study of the law. In my secret heart I had rebelled against his desires. He had never given me any reasons which seemed to justify this line of conduct except, as he frequently said, "There was plenty of room at the top." I could not deny it, because at that time I had never been to the top to verify his statement, and since that time I have never succeeded in getting above the overcrowded condition of affairs at the bottom.

So far as I could learn of my ancestry, there had never been any lawyers in the family since the progenitor of that family in remote times had burst upon the New World. Consequently, there was never any heredity that had given me a desire for the study of the law; in fact, I had always rebelled against any and all study whatsoever, however necessary, however desirable.

It is not out of place here to state that my autocratic father has seen good reasons to moderate his ambitious desires in respect to my vocation in life, and, to speak more plainly, wishes he had not interfered.

Now I had inherited or acquired a certain taste for the soil, which manifested itself in various ways during my boyhood. I had early conceived a taste and interest in mud pies, and had carried the products of that industry on my face and hands to perhaps a greater extent than any child in the neighborhood. I had also manifested a most reprehensible tendency to besmear myself with mud upon every occasion. That this was to a certain extent a matter of heredity I have no doubt.

My great-grandfather had once owned the largest and finest farm in town, and had, while yet a young man, sold the same for a round sum, the interest on which enabled him to live in comfort for the rest of his days and maintain a large family of children, who, as tradition has it, did all they could to relieve that ancestor of all loose money that he possessed. As he passed from this world nearly three quarters of a century ago, it is needless to state that his later life was not embittered by his intimate acquaintance with me. He is gone, but the farm still remains, and the tradition that our family once owned it

is the pleasantest item of family history, one upon which we lay the greatest stress in speaking of the departed glories of the family.

Now had I been able to indulge my strong desire to live the life of a farmer, I have no hesitation, in view of my recent experience, in saying that I would have made the worst specimen of an agriculturalist the world has ever seen, and so perhaps my venerable father wrought better than he knew when he indicated in his convincing manner the road which I was to travel. True enough, I might have made a greater success as a musician, a sign-painter, or a seller of patent medicines, but I stuck to the law.

It is a very curious fact that, although I had in common with the rest of my family a decided objection to hard work and drudgery of any kind, and although office-work came terribly hard to a boy who had spent his early years in the open air, yet after a time the regular hours, the interesting nature of my business, and the acquaintance with all kinds of people began to exercise a fascination over me that resulted perhaps in too great attention to business affairs, and the observance of too long hours in my office.

In consequence of this, and in direct violation of all traditions of my family, I became somewhat used up from over-work, and consulted a physician, who, with strange and terrifying in-

struments, made exhaustive examinations of the workings of my vital organs, and finally suggested that I had better take more exercise, keep in the open air as much as possible, and not allow business affairs to worry me. For, as he said, I had become a little "hipped" from too close attention to business, and needed rest.

Now this gratified me beyond measure, for it is really a delightful thing to have people look upon one as a person who has been sacrificing his health to the demands of his profession, and although I knew in my inmost heart that I never had overworked, but, if the truth were known, had spent a good part of office hours in sitting with my feet on the desk, contemplating the square in front of my office, I fostered to the utmost the delusion under which the doctor and the people in general labored, and I decided to take a rest. I can give you no idea of the pleasure I felt in hearing the remarks made by my acquaintances upon my personal appearance, and in realizing that in the minds of some I was, according to their expression, "booked for the junk heap" unless I took a rest.

It was then that the long-dominant desire to have a small farm or garden patch of my own awoke in me. I knew perfectly well that if I took a deserted farm and tried to bring it to its previous usefulness, history would be repeated, and it

would again become a deserted farm, and probably with an added mortgage.

An opportunity to buy a two-and-one-half acre place on the outskirts of the town, and an equally fortuitous arrival of a complacent mortgagee, solved the difficulty. And so from the inherited disposition for that part of a farmer's life which consisted of lying at ease in a pile of new-mown hay, contemplating the growth of one's vegetables, the plumpness of one's neat stock, the regular markings of one's prize poultry, and the exceeding ripeness of one's fruit, I determined to have that place, in order to eke out the precarious living afforded me by the practice of my profession, by applying myself to arduous labor, which I felt sure would bring me renewed health. I recked not of drought, of storms, of the ravages of coleoptera, of the attacks of orthoptera, and the scourge of hemiptera, of lepidoptera, of hymenoptera, of diptera, of all sorts and kinds of 'ptera, those enemies of bucolic prosperity. Nay, I even dared the heavy handicap of a six per cent power-of-sale mortgage, with interest payable semi-annually in advance.

ways kept in abominably smelling pens, fed upon refuse, and breeders of typhoid fever, malaria, cholera, and other kindred evils.

I assured her that while this was perhaps frequently so, these characteristics were not indigenous to the pigs, but were the results of improper food and unsuitable sanitary arrangements so painfully evident in the ordinary pig-pens, but that I intended to violate all the traditions of country pig-culture, by the development of specimens in a condition of perfect cleanliness, suitably nourished with the most approved foods.

She replied that, while this was all very well in theory, I was the very last person in the world to keep up my interest in anything for any considerable period, and cited a long and painful list of instances in which certain theories of mine had been dissipated and thoroughly exploded, and at considerable expense to me.

I waived the citations, however, and reminded her that the one common ground of neighborly good feeling in a bucolic community was the pig-pen, and that more comfort was obtained of a Sabbath morning, and of a holiday, in leaning over the pig-pen with a neighbor, smoking and exchanging pastoral gossip, than in any other way.

She retorted that I would be in much better business attending church on the Sabbath, and

occasionally spending part of a holiday in beating a few rugs or mowing the lawn, instead of paying out money for what I could do perfectly well myself, if I only had a little energy. Goodness knew she needed the money badly enough for things in the house.

Well, there was little use in continuing the discussion, and so I said no more at the time, but spent the greater part of my leisure hours during the week in building a good stout sleeping-floor in the pig-house, and wheeling in straw, ashes, and dry leaves. I was determined to have pigs.

The next thing was to purchase my pigs. I was somewhat at a loss to make a choice of the comparative merits of Chester White, Poland China, Berkshire, Sussex, Bedford or Jersey Red. All these breeds and many others I had read of in my encyclopædia, but strange to say I could find no mention of the breed known as Runts. I had certainly heard somewhere of Runt pigs, and meant if possible to have some. I had many years before kept fancy pigeons, and knew that the variety known as Runts were the "giants of the pigeon tribe," and their squabs were the quickest-growing, fattest, largest, and most delicious eating of any. The name Runt could therefore be applied to the porcine race for no other purpose, surely, than to indicate the possession of some remarkable qualities. Accordingly I decided

upon Runts, if I could find any, and one evening I went across the way to consult my neighbor Daniel.

Now Daniel, my nearest neighbor, is a gentleman of wealth and position, a lover of horses, an expert judge of cattle, and a famous breeder of swine. Daniel loves a trade in any one of the lines mentioned, and enlivens each exchange with so many quips and jokes and good stories, that, before you are aware, you have made the trade, taking in exchange for your horse or cow or pig a stock of new stories and whatever Daniel may have seen fit to unload upon you.

I believe in perfect frankness whenever I try to trade with a man, or to buy of him anything I know but little of. And so when I told Daniel I wished to buy a pair of his best pigs and would leave the price to his fairness, I knew I should be treated as a man and a brother.

"Now, Daniel," I said, "I don't know anything about pigs, and you do, but I have some decided ideas in the matter. I have thought over the different breeds, and have decided to get the best, even if they do cost a trifle more. I want a good pair of Runts, and I don't know just where I can get any."

"What do you want Runts for?" said Daniel, with an expression of astonishment on his ruddy face.

"Well, I suppose it will be a bit expensive," I replied, "but if a man is going to be a farmer, even an amateur farmer, he might as well do the thing right, and unless you begin right you won't go very far. Now, a few years ago," I continued, "I went in a bit for fancy pigeons and squab-raising, and although I did n't make any money on the venture, I picked up a lot of information. And let me tell you this, Daniel, Runts are the largest, quickest-growing, and easiest to fatten of any breed of pigeons, and I believe there is good money in Runt pigs."

Daniel threw back his head and laughed loudly, then leaning forward, with a shrewd twinkle in his eye, he said: —

"Well, old man, you are more of a farmer than I thought. Now if you are determined to have Runts I will tell you something. I did n't intend to let any one know, but I have a pair of Runts, beauties too, that I will let you have. They come a bit high, because, as I suppose you know, a Runt pig is not nearly as common as other breeds of pigs. You can have a pair of any of my other pigs for twelve dollars, but for the Runts I shall have to charge you eighteen."

"Well, Daniel," I replied cheerfully, "if that is the best you can do, here is your money"; and I handed him the money.

"Well, hold on," he cried; "don't you want to

see the pigs before you buy them? How do you know I will give you what you have paid for?"

"Oh, you will treat me all right. I want Runts, and you have Runts, and I want the best pair you have."

"All right," said Daniel, somewhat doubtfully, as he tucked the bills into his vest-pocket, "you shall have them to-morrow, only I don't want any kick coming."

"There will be no kick coming, Daniel; this is a fair bargain, and as long as I get Runts I shall be satisfied. Only understand, don't palm off on me any ordinary pigs, — just plain Runts and nothing else."

"All right, my son," said Daniel, coughing so violently into his handkerchief that he had to wipe his eyes.

The next noon when I returned from the office to lunch the pigs had arrived, and our entire family, barring my wife, was leaning over the pen contemplating them with awe. And, indeed, at first sight our inexperienced eyes could detect the fact that they were no ordinary pigs. They were small, much smaller than I supposed, and were covered with a most astonishing growth of hair, and their teeth or tusks seemed considerably in advance of their general bodily development.

They stood with their front feet wide apart, and were somewhat wabbly on their hind-legs. Indeed, their progress about their pen resembled that of an inebriated gentleman endeavoring to navigate an uneven sidewalk. But I recollected that the young of Runt pigeons were delicate until they approached maturity. Still, even with these reflections, I did not feel entirely satisfied with my bargain.

After lunch I repaired to the pen, and in the presence of my children administered a proper amount of nutriment to my stock, which, however, did not manifest much enthusiasm for their food, a lack of appreciation of our efforts in their behalf which was unquestionably the result of unfamiliarity with their surroundings.

The next morning was Sunday, and, true to my prophecy, neighbors began to stroll in after breakfast to examine my stock.

"Great Moses!" exclaimed the first man the moment his eyes rested on the animals, "who sold you those Runts?"

"Well, never mind where I got them," I replied shrewdly; "it is n't every one who can get a fine pair of Runts. They came a bit high, but I was bound to have them."

For a moment he eyed me with amazement at my reticence, and then burst into a roar of laughter and clapped me on the back, swearing that I

was a sure enough farmer. Indeed, most of my callers that day seemed so unusually cheerful that I began to be a bit suspicious.

The physical condition of my pets occasioned me some uneasiness, and the recommendations of my friends as to medical treatment were to the last degree discouraging. One recommended charcoal and bone-meal. Another, the amputation of the tail. Another, to slit the forehead and rub in sulphur. Still another, to look for black teeth and pull them.

That night the smallest pig died, and was buried with suitable ceremonies and after titanic exertions with a pickaxe. That afternoon I had stolen an hour from office-work and fared to the library, where I consulted various works on Domestic Swine. After an exhaustive search I found the following: —

"Occasionally there will appear in a litter of pigs a stunted, dwarfed, or misshapen one, known as a runt. Whether this is a harking back to the original type or a direct inheritance from some defective but more recent ancestor matters little. The runt is of no value whatever, and should be killed at birth. Indeed, by allowing him to remain with the others one may menace the well-being of the healthy pigs, inasmuch as the runt is much more liable to contract disease than its healthy congeners. We have yet to hear

of a single instance in which a runt ever developed into a healthy pig."

After reading this oracular essay, I reflected a bit. Daniel had done me. No, that was not quite fair to Daniel. I had done myself, and Daniel was the highly amused medium by which I had been done.

Well, I had paid eighteen dollars for a bit of experience, and it might be of that value in the end, but just at that moment it appeared a rather high price. But then, think of the vast amusement my friends had received and the general rejoicing of the public over the joke. At the thought of this I grew hot and cold by turns.

I soon decided on a plan of action. That night, under cover of darkness, I drove to a neighboring town with my son, and bought a couple of fine, healthy pigs, for which I paid the modest price of eight dollars, leaving the sole surviving runt with the farmer, who promised to put him out of the way.

And so, the next day, when jovial friends called to view my runts, they expressed much astonishment at the unreliability of gossip, and each and every one appeared much discomfited and cast down.

Now the new pigs throve bravely and ate ravenously. True, they squealed raucously when they did not get their food at the regular periods,

but they seemed to grow perceptibly from one day to another, and little by little I began to regain my assurance and to talk a bit.

But, alas for my confidence, I had not yet seen the last of my trouble as a porciculturist, for one morning the three members of the Board of Health stalked into my office and sat down ponderously.

"Squire," said one, after portentously clearing his throat, "be ye aware that ye air a-vilatin' the regilation of the Board of Health in keepin' pigs?"

I was astounded, and gaped at the three gentlemen with open mouth.

"Why, heavens and earth, gentlemen, can't a man keep pigs in a country town on a three-acre piece, when they are kept as clean as fresh straw and dry beds can make them?" I shouted in astonishment.

"No, squire, they can't, s' long 's we're on the Board," he stoutly affirmed; "and what's more," he continued, "I'm s'prised 'at you sh'd try tew dew it, squire, when you know the law."

"Has any complaint been made?" I queried.

"No complaint's been made by nobody," replied the chairman.

"Have you examined the premises?" I asked again.

"Yes, squire, we've looked 'em over keerful, an' we're bound to say ye've kep' 'em neat 'n'

tidy 's a barn-loft, but that don't make any differ, ye can't keep pigs in the compact part of the taown, leastwise not 's long es we fellers is on the Board."

"Why, damn it all, gentlemen, do you seriously mean to forbid me from keeping pigs by calling up a law that is only made to regulate abuses, like the five-miles-an-hour law, and fifty other such laws that I could name?" I demanded, with pardonable heat, but highly questionable emphasis.

"That 's the law, squire, and this is the abuse it's made to regilate, an' we're here to regilate it. Naow what yer goin' tew dew 'baout it?"

I reflected a moment. They were right, such was the law, and I certainly ought to be the first to recognize their right to enforce it, although it was an extreme view to take of it, and sorely disappointing after my earnest and well-meant efforts to benefit and improve the art of keeping pigs.

"Well, gentlemen," I replied at length, "I consider that you are taking an extreme view of the law, but I shall yield. The pigs will go tonight, that is, if you gentlemen will be good enough to give me until then to get rid of them."

"All right, squire," replied the chairman cheerfully. "Ye can have 'til to-morrer mawnin', and if ye'll sell 'em right, I'll buy 'em," he continued, eyeing me with a business air.

"You have n't money enough to buy them, sir," I replied with dignity, and they clumped heavily down the stairs.

That night the pigs were returned to the farmer at the same price which I gave for them, although they were nearly a third larger; and so, although my love for pigs was in a sense betrayed,

> "'T were better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all."

CHAPTER III

LIVESTOCK

THE unforeseen obstacles that were thrown in my way, and rendered abortive my attempts to revolutionize the pig industry of the United States, did not abate one jot of my enthusiasm for the noble art of farming and stock-breeding. After all, pigs were but an incident in the life of a farmer. Statistics demonstrated the fact that, while the fowl and egg industry was increasing by leaps and bounds, to be one of the leading industries of the country, the demand was far in excess of the annual supply.

When in the fifties the first Shanghai fowl was imported, the excitement ran so high that it was currently reported and believed that at last an ideal fowl had been found that would lay two eggs a day and give a pint of milk. Hundreds of misguided enthusiasts retired from the business in disgust when they found that the much vaunted Shanghai fowl was a sort of gallinaceous crane or cormorant, with an abnormal appetite, a voice like an ophicleide, a reproductive capacity under most favorable circumstances of about six

eggs per year for the first year and of none thereafter, and a steadfastness and pertinacity of incubation that only could be abated by setting fire to the nest and consuming nest, eggs, and hen, and occasionally the adjoining buildings, — in which case, and provided the buildings were properly insured, the owner made money and lived happily ever afterwards.

Yet there remained a steady increase in the business, and of late years the invention and successful adoption of the incubator and brooder had forced the business into the front rank of national industries. When one reflects on the vast scope in the usefulness of an egg, ranging from the tempting of the appetite of a broken-down sport to the assaulting of a temperance lecturer or *prima donna assoluta*, one cannot wonder at the increasing demand.

In this matter I had no illusions. I knew something about hens, as I had kept them in my boyhood. And I knew also the difficulty of making them lay with any degree of regularity. But they were interesting, if aggravating, and I had no doubt of being able, at least, to have fresh eggs from my own forcing-house, and spurless spring chickens of known and recorded juvenility. The unpedigreed egg is sometimes dangerous to meddle with. Like the little girl adorned as to her forehead with ambrosial locks, —

"When she was good she was very, very good,
And when she was bad she was horrid."

I consulted skilled artisans, with a view of suitably amending my pig-pen to masquerade as an attractive henhouse; and while these somewhat expensive amendments were in order I cast about for means to improve the fertility of my farm.

I greatly preferred the old-fashioned dressing to manufactured fertilizers, and as the snow was now overdue, I made arrangements to have a large amount of dressing spread over my land whenever the weather betokened snow. By these means I expected to avoid any unpleasant odor by an immediate covering of snow. And so, one chill day when the sky was overcast and gray, the wind northeast, and a few flakes of feathery snow came silently sifting down, I notified the contractor, and before I left for the office, teams were arriving and brawny Milesians were spreading dressing thickly over our premises.

The odor as I left was a bit penetrating, but a brisk snow-storm was beginning, and I reassured my family, who were individually expressing what seemed to me an unreasonable disposition to find fault with our arrangements.

Within an hour the clouds had cleared away, the sun came out, the snow melted, and the temperature rose many degrees. I was so occupied at my office that I did not think much about it

until my wife called me up on the 'phone, and the following conference ensued: —

"Hullo?" interrogatively.

"Hullo," responsively and confirmatively.

"Is that you?"

"'S me."

"Well, for goodness' sake stop these men spreading any more of that horrid old manure. It smells so — Hullo! hullo!! hullo!!! Why don't you listen? — dreadfully that we can't stand it. We have shut every window and door in the house, and of course the steam is just sizzling, and — Hullo!"

"Why don't you tell them to stop?"

"I have talked and talked to them, and they said you told them to put it all on to-day and not to stop for any one."

"Call one of them to the 'phone."

"What?"

"Call one of them to the 'phone, and I will talk to him."

"What in the world are you thinking of? Do you suppose I will have one of those smelly men right off a dump-cart all over my floor? You *must* come up."

"Well, I'll come in a few moments."

"Now do hurry. It is perfectly dreadful! Oh, dear! I wish the plaguy place had been sunk before you ever bought it. Good-by."

"Good-by." I hung up the receiver, dismissed my client, and started for home.

When I got there — Well, in justice to my wife I must admit that she had not overstated the case. The greater part of the lawn and field was thickly strewn with steaming dressing, the whole atmosphere fairly palpitated, and travel on our street had practically ceased.

There was only one thing to do, and I did it. Before noon several loads of wood ashes were being sifted carefully over my top-dressing, by various men and boys whom I had pressed into service, and by nightfall the annoyance was abated; the neighbors and their families had returned from the hotel accommodation they had hastily engaged down town; my wife had reconsidered her determination to bring a libel for divorce on the ground of "treatment calculated to injure health or reason"; I had paid an extravagant bill for top-dressing and a still larger one for the antidote, and peace was once more secured.

At all events, my land, or a certain part of it, would be fertile next spring, and that was the main thing after all. So I superintended operations on our henhouse and incidentally bought a horse.

I had had considerable experience with horses, and had ridden and driven them since I was very

small. I already had one, a nervous, high-strung sorrel mare, an excellent roadster and fair saddler, but too impatient and quick for farm-work, and I knew that in the spring the price would be high.

One day while reading the advertisements of horse-sales in Boston, I found one that attracted my notice. I paid scant notice to the "Lady going to Europe, and who wished to get a good home for her seal-brown trotting mare, Jennie B.," etc.; to the "Administrator of a deceased doctor will sell a fine stable outfit, and will throw in the favorite roadster of the doctor"; to the "Forty Canadian chunks just off a contracting job." The lady had gone to Europe too often, the doctor had departed this life with too much regularity, and the Canadian chunks had appeared in undiminished numbers for too long a period, to deceive even me.

But when I read, "Bay mare of good breeding, in foal to Electric Jim (2.16¼), first dam Sukey M. (2.21), second dam Wilkes Jane (2.12½); mare good roadster, sound and kind, had been driven by a lady and used to farm-work, sold for the high dollar," I was interested at once.

Perhaps the one thing calculated more than any other to stamp a modest farm as a stock-breeding establishment is a brood-mare and colt; and besides, since local farmers had given up the raising of colts, good, safe, well-broken native

horses were scarce. Here, at least, was a chance to raise a colt with but very little trouble.

I was on the spot at the date of the sale, and on examination the mare pleased me. She would weigh about eleven hundred pounds, had good clean legs, a kind eye, and an intelligent head. Indeed, when she was led out, she pleased the crowd, and I found myself bidding against several horsy-looking men. However, by perseverance I finally had her knocked down to me for $175.

For a week after her arrival I used her singly, in double harness, on the road, in the dump-cart, and she suited me perfectly. While not as fast as Polly, she was steady and courageous on the road, and was well-mannered and quiet in the stable. I was perfectly delighted with my bargain, and looked to the foal to much more than offset my loss on pigs, and the unusual expense of the double layer of fertilizer. My henhouse had been finished and at no great expense, and I consulted poultry magazines for which I had subscribed, to see which were the best breeds.

But from them I got no reliable advice, for according to all the advertisements and articles I read, all breeds were the best layers, and if the smaller breeds did not have as much meat on them as the larger, their meat was more tender and succulent. All were winter layers, non-set-

ters, and easily tamed, and the handsomest fowl in existence.

Indeed, the number of breeds had so greatly increased, and their names were so unfamiliar, that I was for a long time as one wandering in a foreign land. I looked in vain for Bolton Grays and Rocky Mountains, the two breeds the most favored when I was a boy; I could not find them.

Instead, I found various varieties of Wyandottes, Langshans, Minorcas, Orpingtons, Sicilian Buttercups, Rhode Island Reds, Anconas, Faverolles, and others, of which I had never heard. I doubt if Rip van Winkle on awakening from his long sleep on the mountains was more bewildered than I was after my first hour with a poultry journal.

The journal was full of cuts and photographs of noble-looking but strange fowl, and of extensive poultry plants, which both convinced and astonished me at the magnitude of the business.

I also learned that the Hon. R. Cuthbert Jenkins had purchased of Lady the Honorable Letitia Jane Cholmondeley her entire stock and all rights in her famous strain of Jubilee Orpingtons, which amazed me intensely. But where were the Bolton Grays, and what had become of the Rocky Mountain fowl? Could they have utterly perished from the earth like the auk and the bustard? It seemed scarcely possible. The

Black Spanish, the Brahma, and the Cochin were still extant, as well as the Game Fowl and the Sebright Bantam.

I still had some friends and must be content with them. It was not until about a week later that I found that the Bolton Gray and the Rocky Mountain were still in existence, but masquerading under the more pretentious title of Silver-Penciled Hamburgs and American Dominique respectively. And what was delightful, I found I could get some in a neighboring town. So I took a day off, harnessed my new purchase into the farm-wagon in which I had loaded two slatted boxes, donned my heavy overcoat, and started out to purchase the fowls. I had excellent luck, purchased a dozen fine specimens of each breed, loaded them on the wagon, and started homeward.

All went well until I got home, when I met with a slight accident, which, while the results were not very serious, nearly influenced me to sell the farm and return to town. There were two stone posts at the entrance of my driveway, which I could safely negotiate with Polly by day or night, in spite of her nervousness and rapid gait. It was nearly dark when I got home, and I did not realize that I was driving a horse somewhat new to the premises. In fact, I was laying plans for my fowls and only regained my wits when I

found myself on the ground under the superincumbent weight of two slatted coops filled with flapping, squawking, clawing hens, while the horse obediently stopped and waited for me to regain my seat and take command.

When the family arrived, all asking questions at once and loudly wondering if I were dead, — an unreasonable assumption in view of my language, — I had righted my wagon, replaced one coop with its prisoners intact, and had stood the other on its broken end, from which half of its occupants had escaped and were wandering round making rustlings in the leaves and bushes. After what was left of my load had been safely secured in the henhouse, I spent the next two hours, lantern in hand, in tracking, chasing, and running to earth the fugitive hens, after which, completely fagged out, I retired.

CHAPTER IV

THE GALLIC WAR

THE next morning I was at the hen-house before I took care of the horses. It was a sharp morning, with overcast sky, and the fowls looked a trifle hunchy.

However, some dry grain scattered among the litter on the floor of their pens set them scratching actively, and as they scratched and warmed to their work they began to prate cheerfully, while the two cocks paraded up and down in front of their wire partition, defying each other, and saying doubtless all manner of evil things of each other. As I watched them swell and strut and lower their heads defiantly, and occasionally make a short rush at each other, a vague shadow of the old feeling that used to induce me when a boy to toss our rooster over a neighbor's fence, and then watch the battle that would ensue, came over me, and for a moment I felt a sinful desire to let them together for just a few jumps.

The Hamburg was a handsome, silvery fellow, with long sickle feathers and well-developed

spurs, while the Dominique was solid and chunky, with the well-marked hawk plumage that glowed with health.

However, I refrained, and after watching them until breakfast-time, I went in without having fed and watered Polly and our well-bred brood-mare, which welcomed me after breakfast with reproachful nickerings and pricked-up ears.

That noon, to my great delight, I found three fresh eggs in the nests, which I conveyed triumphantly into the house, dropping one on the floor, however, in my eagerness to show them to my wife, and induce her to retract certain opinions she had expressed to the effect that I would never get a single egg from my old hens as long as I lived.

I might say in passing that that egg was somewhat more than ruined for life. The painstaking endeavors I made to scrape it up with a spoon added nothing to its value or sphere of usefulness. But never mind, I had at least received some financial return for my outlay. Eggs were worth forty-two cents a dozen.

That afternoon the long delayed snow-storm came, and before morning nearly a foot had fallen. I was out betimes with shovel and plough, and it was a pleasure to sit on the plough and drive while my son wielded the shovel. Exercise is a good thing for the young, and one of the greatest

pleasures I experience is to sit and see others work.

The air was brisk and full of oxygen, the snow was dazzling in the bright sunshine, the jolly tinkle of the sleigh-bells filled the air, while a flock of juncos sported in the tall dry weeds and grasses that in the fence-corners barely showed their drooping heads above their white mantle.

I felt the beauty of the country and country life as never before, and how petty seemed my disappointments in life, in the great peace that seemed to spread over the face of Nature! As I went down to the office that morning, leaving my stock warm and well fed and my modest farm half buried in fleecy clouds of snow, I thought how much of life and beauty is now hidden safe and warm under Nature's blankets, only awaiting that magic summons to spring up into active and beneficent fruition.

All that day sleighs dashed about town, and wood-sleds drawn by single teams, pairs, and fours thronged the streets. The farmers had been waiting for the snow. This set me thinking. What cleaner, better, fresher farm-work could there be than chopping in the winter woods. That's it! I would do it. Business was not very brisk in the office, and if it were, there was no particular need of a man being a slave to his profession. I had known instances of men actu-

ally drying up in my profession, and being, as far as real usefulness is concerned, "Like thin ghosts or disembodied creatures."

The one thing I needed to develop a real home-like, woodsy, farmer-like feeling was to get into the woods, and load wood, and smell the delicious fragrance of the pines and the balsam of the freshly cut trunks.

That afternoon I borrowed a single-horse sled of Daniel, equipped with a work-harness and chain-traces, arranged with him for a load or two of cord-wood piled in a distant wood-lot, and started with a Hibernian friend for the lot, to pluck and garner it for myself. Arrived at the lot, I let down the bars and drove along a rough lumber-road, through another pair of bars, down a hemlock-shaded path, where the heavily laden branches dipped and showered us with feathery masses. Then across a small bridge spanning a frozen, snow-covered brook, until I came to a cleared lot dotted with piles of neatly corded wood.

In the distance we could see the smoke of a shanty fire, and hear the songs of Canadian wood-choppers, "Habitants of story," and the ring and thud of their axes. "Jolly, happy fellows," I thought, "true, care-free sons of the woods, without sordid thoughts, without disturbing and unhappy ambitions destined never to be

rewarded. They indeed have the true secret of happiness. Enough to eat, enough to wear, health, the fresh air laden with balsamic fragrance, never a thought of money. Jolly, happy fellows, they are to be envied."

And so, intent on such thought, I sprang lightly from our sled, donned my leather mittens, and vied with Pat in loading cord-wood. True, I did not successfully vie with him, because that seasoned veteran loaded by far the greater part of it; but I, in a measure, superintended the job and occasionally landed a stick on the sled.

We took good measure, Pat saw to that, and when we started we were obliged to pry the runners out of the ruts where they had frozen. Lady M. pulled grandly, and we were smoothly sailing across the lot on the down-grade, when we heard loud shouting in our rear, and turned to see a picturesque figure in blanket-coat, moccasins, and toque, wildly waving its hands and shouting a jumbled and somewhat incoherent mixture of French and English, from which we gathered that he had some suspicions of the honesty of our intentions.

"Voleur, arrêtez-vous, you have ma hwood volé; par la Sainte Vierge, you have steal ma hwood, 'cré Baptême, bagosh, seh!"

Rushing frantically to the horse's head, he grasped the reins, as if to prevent our escape,

whereupon Pat tumbled off the load, spitting on his hands and exclaiming, "Dom the moonkey, lave me poonch th' Dago hid off him, whirroo!" And he jumped two feet in the air and cracked his heels together. I violently restrained Pat and ordered him on the load, which was good generalship on my part, as, from the neighboring lot, twenty excited compatriots of the first gaudy brigand came piling over the fence, and surrounded us amid a torrent of Gallic expletives.

"For the love of hivin, yer 'anner," pleaded Pat, "lave me lick the twinty of thim, lave me land one poonch on the dhirty moog of ould Plaid Belly"; by which appropriate title he designated the premier brigand.

"Keep quiet, Pat," I remonstrated, "this is a case for arbitration."

"Arbitration be dommed," growled Pat, "wan good belt in th' gob of ould Plaid Belly wud do th' job aisy."

However, I refused Pat's modest request, and raising my hand impressively, addressed the leader in our best Exeter Cotton Mill French.

"Messieurs, qu'avez vous m'en voudre; Ich weiss nicht was zie meinen, dites-moi, pour l'amour de Dieu. What is it that it is?"

Now this was so plain that even Pat was heard to mutter, "Begob, he can talk Dago talk awl right."

"Vous êtes un scélérat, vous have steal ma hwood, mille tonneurs, sacré', bagosh, me!" he shouted.

"'Cré Bapture, bagosh," responded the chorus of voyageurs, "mille tonneurs."

"Jist wan poonch, yer 'anner," pleaded Pat.

"Shut up, Pat, I will run this affair without any fighting," I replied.

"Pardon, messieurs, vous avez fait un faux pas. J'ai verkaup die bois von Herr Gilman, a qui appartient tous les bois herein."

"Il n'appartient a M'sieu Gilman, il appartient a moi. I have it buy of M'sieu Gilman, me!" he shouted, waving his arms.

"Oui, oui, bagosh, c'est vrai," responded the chorus.

"Oh, wirra, wirra, 't would be aisy," murmured Pat.

"Monsieur," I continued, courteously, "parlez un peu plus lentement, un peu langsam. La conversation rapide nicht mir gefallt."

"Bien, m'sieu," he responded more affably, apparently soothed by my lingual attainments, "I have buy the hwood of M'sieu Gilman. J'ai coupé le bois pour lui, et il m'a payé de l'argent, il m'a vendu le bois detaché, for one hunner twonny-fav dollar, bagosh, seh, n'est ce pas?"

"Bagosh, seh," echoed the chorus.

"Ich verstehe parfaitement," I replied. "Je vous paierai pour les bois, si vous voulez," I continued gracefully.

Thereupon smiles beamed on Gallic faces and peace seemed imminent, much to the disgust of Pat, who yearned for war.

"Bien, m'sieu," said the other, "eef m'sieu me giv fav dollar, m'sieu can eet have."

"Th' robber! lave me —" began Pat.

"Pat," I interrupted, "we have been trespassing, and it is only fair that we should compensate this gentleman for the annoyance we have caused. We should be the first to recognize the justice of his claim, and do what we can to foster in these adopted citizens a respect for the law, that you and I as American citizens have."

"Hill and blazes!" scoffed Pat, "wan good poonch wud tach thim dommed canucks more rispict than fhorty laws, and lave me give 'im jist wan for loock."

But I refused, and handing a five-dollar bill to our friend, I gathered up the reins and drove off, not before we heard our "care-free sons of the woods, without sordid thoughts, without disturbing and unhappy ambitions destined never to be rewarded," remark to one another: —

"Nom de Dieu, il a payé enormement; quel fou! he-he-he 'cré Baptême."

And that night when we called on Daniel and

related our experience, that guileful individual nearly had a seizure from convulsions of sinful mirth. But seriously, was that a Christian way of treating a man and a brother?

CHAPTER V

HENS

THE next day I was so stiffened by my somewhat unusual exertions that I fairly creaked. So I rather slighted the grooming of my horses, but looked carefully to the welfare of my thoroughbred fowls, and was fully rewarded by seeing two on the nests.

That day a slatted box arrived at my office by express, containing a most magnificent black-red gamecock. I was out when the expressman arrived, or I should have required him to deliver it at my farm. As it was, the bird kept up a most terrific crowing during the forenoon, leaving some doubt in the minds of casual callers or prospective clients as to whether they were entering a cockpit, a poultry exhibition, or the unassuming office of an attorney-at-law and amateur farmer. As the charges had been prepaid by my unknown benefactor, I felt that I could afford to secure the bird's transmission to my farm at the hands of a small boy and at the expense of ten cents.

That noon when I went to lunch, I first repaired to my barn to liberate the gamecock.

But somebody had evidently anticipated my humane desire to emancipate the prisoner, and I found the box empty. A dreadful suspicion occurred to me, and I made rapid strides for the hencoop, where I found my fears confirmed.

A battle had been fought, and evidences of it in the shape of tufts of silvery feathers scattered over the pen in which my beautiful Hamburg cock had been confined were abundant, while in a corner, looking like a soiled and frayed feather-duster, lay the remains of that proud and well-bred bird. His conqueror, splendid and unhurt, scratched and curveted before the consorts of the late deceased king, and crowed so lustily that the very rafters rang, and occasionally, as if to dissipate any doubt that the ladies present might have entertained of his being the "champeen," took a whack at his antagonist, and plucked from the stiffened and prostrate form a choice nosegay of feathers, which he strewed at the feet of the penciled beauties.

Either my instructions had not been sufficiently explicit, or that boy possessed a strong strain of sporting blood in his composition. "If I could only catch that rascal I would—" Well, I could n't really say what I would do, but I probably would have cross-questioned him severely for the purpose of ascertaining just what sort of a fight the old Hamburg put up.

The next thing was to get the gamecock out of the pen. It was my intention when I bought those Hamburgs to breed to a feather, and not allow any hybrids on the farm, but the presence of an alien rooster of undisputed lineage, but practically unknown moral standing, in a flock of young and giddy female birds, mere schoolgirl biddies in fact, might excite in the unregenerate a suspicion of a taint in the blood of their progeny, to say nothing of a blot on their moral escutcheon.

So I opened the door between the pens, stepped in, and carefully fastened it to avoid a second fatality to the Dominique at its hands, or rather at its heels. While my back was turned and my attention occupied in this task, the feathered pugilist struck me a most vicious blow in the calf of my right leg, which hurt outrageously, and so angered me that I rushed furiously after him.

Away he went round the coop, flapping and swearing in shrill gallinaceous language, while I came right after him, doing my best to answer his remarks in vigorous English. Now any one who has endeavored to catch an adult and frantic rooster in a small room, and in the midst of a round dozen of hysterical and gymnastic hens, in full possession of astonishing powers of speech and motion, knows what a dreadful task is before one.

It seemed as if every single hen had been multiplied by ten, shedding shrieks, squawks, feathers, dust, and scratches; and as I pursued that gorgeous devil up, over, round, and through the pen, I was bombarded with hens. One frantic biddy collided with my best stiff hat so violently that it was knocked off, stepped on, and ruined, before I was aware of its loss. Another nearly blinded me as I unexpectedly intercepted its arrow-like flight from one roost to another; the number of times I bumped my head against those roosts was beyond computation; I stepped on the edge of a large, deep tin pan filled with water, and the same promptly reared aloft and cast its contents over my soiled, dusty, and feather-covered person. Two hens escaped by dashing bodily through the windows, which I had neglected to have properly protected by wire; but at last I caught that infernal gamecock by the legs, whereupon, finding itself caught, it stopped squawking, reached for my unoccupied hand, and with its iron beak gouged a segment therefrom and struggled to bring its sharp spurs to play.

When, after rescuing the mangled remains of my hat and immuring the murderer in a separate prison, I returned to my family I was an appalling sight. I was festooned with cobwebs, downy with feathers, covered with dust, and drenched with water. One side of my face was

smeared with dirt, and the other was seamed with scratches where maniacal pullets had deftly dealt me glancing blows, my hand was bleeding, and my new hat ruined.

However, I had determined to become a farmer, and all my unpleasant experiences were in a way valuable, and would doubtless bear fruit. In some ways farming had not proved exactly profitable, but it was far more exciting than I had ever dreamed.

For the week following the chase of the game-cock, and the tragic death of our fine stock bird, I was quite closely confined to the office with an epidemic of legal business that broke loose. It seemed as if almost every third man I met was tormented with an unconquerable desire to quarrel about a right of way, to institute criminal proceedings for the collection of a civil claim, or to file a libel for divorce on untenable grounds.

This tried me severely, for while such business is seldom remunerative, and needs to be sorted out with the greatest care, the legal transaction of the best of it, to say the least, adds nothing to one's reputation either as a lawyer or a gentleman, which terms should be, but are not always, synonymous.

Again, clients in such classes of business know so much more than their legal advisers, and are so tenacious of their opinions, that in many cases

I STEPPED ON THE EDGE OF A LARGE, DEEP TIN PAN

it is almost impossible to get rid of them without resorting to violence.

And so, at the end of the next week I was just yearning for a taste of the farm, and for a chance to put to the test some of the theories I had been forming in regard to the proper development of my stock and the bringing my farm up to the standard set by government publications of the Agricultural Department. I had studied faithfully the various poultry books and magazines, and felt that I could at once detect that grim destroyer, roup, the moment I saw it; and for several days I had, when feeding and watering my fowls, looked them over with considerable trepidation, fearful of the dread scourge, and yet determined if necessary to kill, burn, and reduce to infinite nothingness any unfortunate fowls that might be attacked, and even prepared to go to the extreme length of burning the hencoop.

I also learned with profound regret that there was no known remedy for fatty degeneration of the liver, or tumors in the gizzard, but that pip could be cured by certain preparations to be procured only of the advertiser; that gapes and cholera could be promptly cured by explicitly following certain directions sent by mail, "Enclose twenty-five cents in stamps," which I did, and received "specific directions" to kill the affected specimens at once; that bumble-foot could

be also effectually remedied by cutting open the foot and rubbing in a preparation, the ingredients of which could be obtained only of the advertiser; that this remedy was the result of years of study at the expense of thousands of dollars.

I also learned that there were thirty or forty "best" remedies for vermin, fifteen or twenty "only" remedies for vermin, and at least a dozen "best and only" remedies for vermin. Indeed, so much was said of the ravages of vermin that I felt quite crawly every time I finished a poultry magazine.

CHAPTER VI

THE REMEDY AND THE DISEASE

I LEARNED how to caponize fowls, at least in theory, and when I sent for a price-list of caponizing instruments, I was deluged for weeks with pamphlets and appeals, and men with beards and without neckties called and tried to sell me expensive sets of instruments.

I read a particularly fine and smoothly written article claiming that, if the moulting period could be brought on in June by any method of feeding, fall and winter eggs would be plentiful, and that a fortune awaited a successful solution of this vexed problem. Indeed, I had been so interested in this matter that I hazarded another twenty-five cents as an investment in one advertiser who claimed to possess the secret, and to be willing to impart it at that reasonable figure to all comers. I was not particularly disappointed when I received the following instructions: "Pick the fowls thoroughly without killing, about the 20th of May in each year, then let their feathers grow."

I had purchased two game-hens to make confinement less irksome to my gamecock, and sent for a new Hamburg cock; the hens were laying well, and I began to lay plans for spring planting.

Although spring was far away, catalogues were to be had for the asking; and daily, in high rubber boots, I walked over my land, making plans to have a vegetable garden here, some pear trees here, a pie-plant patch here, a row of sunflowers by the fence, and a grape arbor by the side of the barn.

I desired to add a Jersey cow to my personal possessions, but could not quite see my way clear to spare the time necessary to milk and care for her without neglecting the duties of my profession.

I was brought somewhat abruptly from my theorizing by an unexpected development in the hen industry. One morning, on going to feed them, I found one hen dead in a corner, headless and badly gnawed, — evidently the work of rats, as a hole in a corner of the pen showed only too plainly.

This was a calamity second only to roup. I had read of whole communities of fowls ravaged by rats, and the remedy was obvious; not traps or cats or terriers, but ferrets, the one animal that could pursue rats into their subterranean fastnesses and there conquer and destroy them.

I removed the deceased pullet, buried it in the compost heap, plugged up the rat-hole with broken glass and tin, and sought the latest poultry magazine. There it was: "Five Hundred Ferrets for Sale." Here again: "Ferrets for sale, the only means of effectually ridding your premises of rats." And here: "Ferrets, the friend of poultry," and "Ferrets, the preserver of fowls."

I did not want five hundred of them, but thought a pair of healthy specimens would be a mighty good investment. The main winter industry of my farm was threatened with extinction, and it behooved me to act, and act with promptness.

So I went to Boston the next day, although it is my principle never to travel unnecessarily, except in the transaction of business for a client, and at his expense. I went directly to a bird store on Portland Street, and inquired for ferrets. I was shown some beauties, — that is, the proprietor spoke of them as beauties, although to me they seemed snaky, red-eyed varmints of a most unattractive and unprepossessing appearance.

They had, however, some astonishing accomplishments, which amazed me greatly. The dealer put five of them into a cigar-box, in the cover of which was a small round hole, out of which one promptly poked its head, and seizing a piece of raw meat the dealer held out to it, hung to

it with a grip of steel, while the box with its entire weight swung to and fro. Then, opening the box and allowing two to fasten their jaws to a piece of meat, he took one by the tail and swung them both over his head without loosening their grip. He handled them like kittens without any danger, and assured me they were well trained and harmless, but cautioned me against handling them when they were fastened to their natural prey, the rat.

I was convinced, and bought a pair. I was doubtful whether or not I should choose a sort of sorrel and a black, but finally decided on a roan with gray mane and tail, and a buckskin with red eyes, had them safely wired in a box, and took the next train back.

I could scarcely wait for the train to arrive at my station, so anxious was I to try the skill of my new purchase; and as soon as I removed my overcoat, I put for the henhouse, opened the box, and turned the ferrets down the rat-hole, which, in my absence, had been widened materially, and in they went.

No sooner had they disappeared than a sharp squealing was heard far down in the bowels of the earth, and in a moment the hole appeared to boil over with rats. One gray-whiskered old fellow started to climb over me, and gave me a horrible fright, but I shook him off and killed him

with a shovel. The rest darted out of the half-open door, and went leaping away over the snow.

While I was awaiting the reappearance of my ferrets, and after the excited hens had calmed down, a sudden commotion in the other coop attracted my attention, and hastily stepping in I found a fine pullet struggling and flapping in her death-agonies, with my buckskin ferret hanging to her windpipe. Seizing it by the body with one hand and the moribund pullet with the other, I tore it from its quarry, when it turned upon me and sunk its teeth in my forefinger, nor would it let go although I danced and swore and shook my wounded hand violently. It was only when I choked it nearly to death with the other hand that I loosed its grip, slammed it in its box, and fastened the cover.

After bandaging my hand I waited for the roan to come forth. What to do to entice it from its safe retreat I did not know. For a while I whistled. I did not know whether or not that was the proper salutation, but I tried it for what it was worth. It was probably not good form in musteline circles, for the roan paid no attention to it.

Then I tried the bleeding form of the freshly killed hen; but the wary animal evidently had seen my rude treatment of the buckskin, and

was resolved not to give me an opportunity to maltreat it, and came not forth.

Finally, I had recourse to water poured down the hole. I was bound to have that animal now dead or alive, and for half an hour poured pail after pail of water down the hole without the slightest impression. The faster I poured, the faster the water disappeared and the drier the hole seemed. It was evident that the hole was connected with some great subterranean lake or cave, and I could n't have filled it by any method short of turning the river through it.

And so, at my wits' end, I devised the following scheme. I sawed a hole in a box, arranged an entrance of wire that, like a trap for homing pigeons, allowed a visitor to enter, but prevented a tenant from jumping his board-bill, poked the buckskin into the box, — I did not dare to handle that savage biter, — placed the box near the hole, and then, after stopping up the other hole, left them for the night.

The next morning I repaired at an unusually early hour to the coop, and, to my unbounded amazement, found that the buckskin had escaped and with its mate had been on a reign of terror, and that three of my best birds lay foully murdered.

My indignation knew no bounds. I thought of poison, of shot-guns, of boiling water, and

of other cruel and drastic measures, but as a last resort, and after a practically accurate repetition of the scene of the chase of the gamecock, caught and removed all the living hens from the coop, procured two steel traps, baited them with raw meat, and before noon caught both marauders, which were so badly hurt that I had to kill them.

Thus did I learn another valuable but expensive lesson. I afterwards was told by a veteran of experience that the whole difficulty could have been avoided by using muzzles on my ferrets, which would then drive the rats away permanently without endangering my fowls.

I mended the broken windows, replaced my depleted flock with others of like species, and for a time my farm life was uneventful. Daily I fed and watered, bedded and groomed my horses, and cared for my hens. Snow-storms came, and the drifts piled high round my buildings. Yet it was a pleasure to wield the broad snow-shovel and drive Lady M. to plough through the drifts. It was also a pleasure, of a sunny afternoon, to saddle Polly and the pony and ride out into the country. The world of white is very beautiful, the air is crisp and tingling, the snow, hard-beaten in the roadway, is soft, dry, and feathery at the sides.

But perhaps the pleasure that leaves the keener and more complete sense of satisfaction in one's mind is this. A cold biting wind from the north-

east has brought a fierce drifting snow-storm in its wake. All day long it has snowed and drifted, and with increasing cold. The storm has driven pedestrians indoors, scarcely a sleigh-bell is heard, while the sifting snow whirls and eddies and dashes against the window-panes, and the wind wails and shrieks and sobs around the building.

It is three o'clock, there are no clients, and I start for home. The blast stings as I strike the open, and I have to pause to get my breath, then with lowered head plunge through the drifts, beaten, lashed, and staggering in the cutting wind, while the fine, dry snow stings my face like needles.

Arrived at the farm, out of breath and half-frozen, I put on my stable clothes, a heavy sweater, lumbermen's felt boots and a woolen toque, incase my hands in heavy woolen gloves, mix up a mess of hot mash with enough hard grain in it to last, and a dash of cayenne pepper, and stagger through the drifts to the hencoop.

The hens are already on the roost, as the afternoon is growing dark in the storm, but they readily come down and fill themselves to repletion on the steaming mess. I see that all windows are fast and all water-cans emptied, and when the last morsel is eaten and the satisfied birds are beginning to fly back to their roosts and settle

themselves comfortably, with little clucks and chirps of satisfaction, I leave them, shut and lock the outer door, and go to the stable.

Here I find the snow so drifted that I have to kick it away from the door before I can open it. I lead the horses out of their stalls into the floor, stagger to the house and back with pails of water, then shake down their hay, fill their grain-box and bed them ankle-deep with clean, dry straw.

I then readjust their blankets, tighten their girths, and close the door of the stall-room, leaving them comfortably bedded and fed, as warm and comfortable as dry beds and tight quarters and good food can make them.

As I close and lock the barn-door, it is dusk and the storm is increasing. In the sheltered places under the eaves and under the roofs of the open sheds colonies of English sparrows are gathering; and as I reach the house, change my clothes, and take a cushioned rocker by the library fire, I feel a deep satisfaction that the stock is safe and comfortable.

And while the wind howls round the house that night, and the snow dashes against the windows and rattles on the clapboards, I sleep the better for that thought.

CHAPTER VII

MY OLD FRIEND NICK: A FAILURE IN WHOLESALE

AS might be expected from statements made in the preceding chapters I was no novice in the raising of poultry. Indeed, on one occasion I had gone into poultry-culture in a sort of wholesale way which bid fair to make or break me and my partner, and did one or the other thing to both of us, as the story will show.

It is many years now since my old friend Nick died. A queer, whimsical little chap was Nick. A weazened, crooked, bandy-legged little man of fifty-five or sixty, with a face like that of a little gnome fashioned out of a hickory nut, such as we occasionally see in small stores. His nose was immense, and had acquired a sidewise twist that to follow would keep him traveling in an endless circle (circles are endless come to think of it), while his smile would provoke an answering smile from a graven image. A sparsely grown beard of the color of badly cured salt hay, and of that peculiarly wiry quality of the hair in cheap

mattresses or haircloth sofas, completed a personality at once grotesque and pathetic.

Nick's voice was of a queer, high-pitched quality, his pronunciation of the broadest cockney, and his profanity picturesque and voluble almost beyond belief. Like the steamboat mate in the book: —

> "He would curse things with an emphasis
> So extremely rich and rare,
> As to savor of the fervency
> And eloquence of prayer."

And yet despite the physical disabilities under which Nick labored I liked him, respected him, and was genuinely amused whenever I saw or spoke with him. And I was not alone in this. No child feared him, no dog passed him without a wag of the tail, and no human being ever received other than kindness at his hands.

He was a weaver by trade, and years before had come from England with his brother 'Arry, whose faithful shadow he was until 'Arry's tragic death years later. 'Arry, also a weaver, had prospered, and was a person of considerable importance in the community.

Nick had not prospered. He had worked, like 'Arry, faithfully and hard, but his earnings went like smoke. What 'Arry expressed a desire for, Nick would get for him. What 'Arry's son and daughter desired, Nick gave freely and without

stint. Whenever his friends needed help, they went to Nick. He gave what he had without question, freely, cheerfully, with that true spirit of giving that asks no return.

So much was he bound up in the fortunes of 'Arry, that when the manufacturing company for which they both worked saw fit to dismiss 'Arry on account of some difference of opinion as to his earning capacity, Nick at once gave notice, and retired in huge disgust and amid a storm of profanity that lasted for the entire week.

"An' sayes th' owd mon t' me," said Nick one day in explanation of the matter, "'Nick, th' art worket ower weel twonty yeer, wheerfore needst tha go?'"

"An' Hi sayes to 'e, 'An' ma brither 'Arry 's na gude enow t' work for tha, it's to 'ell tha canst go wi tha owd mill for aw Nick!' An' wi' thot Hi stamped hout th' dure. An' th' owd mon wa graidely sore ower it."

'Arry was killed one day while crossing the railroad track, and with his death came a great change into Nick's life. He was not less kind to his friends, or less thoughtful of the welfare of those to whom he was indebted for a home. But he was not the careless, jolly, cheerful Nick of old.

My intimate acquaintance with Nick began about this time, in connection with the settlement of 'Arry's estate. Nick, while not deriving any

benefit from the estate, nevertheless, in his zeal to further the settlement, succeeded in involving himself in several legal entanglements, from which it was my privilege to rescue him, and I thereby earned his gratitude and admiration to such a degree that he delivered frequent and high-pitched assertions to the effect that "'Enry was a 'ell of a feller." He further paid me the following (we hope undeserved) compliment: "Hi like tha, 'Enry, dormned if Hi don't. Tha 't more lang-leggit nor 'Arry, but tha' sweers for aw th' world like 'Arry." I accepted the homage thus given, but had mental reservations as to my ability to "sweer like 'Arry," who was an artist in that line.

The want of worldly goods under ordinary circumstances did not affect Nick in the least degree; yet I surmised from some of his remarks that he was beginning to feel that he was practically penniless. His nephew, who had succeeded to 'Arry's farm, had generously offered him a home, but, as Nick feelingly remarked, —

"Johnny 's aw reet, but 't is na th' same. Wi' 'Arry things were sair differ; aw thot 'Arry 'ad were mine, hand aw thot Hi 'ad were 'Arry's."

I suggested that he go back to the mill, but he was profanely adamant in his refusal.

"Blawst th' blank-dashed owd mill," was his sole comment; and then he added: "Tha sees,

'Enry, Hi always wanted a 'en farm. Hi cood raise cheekins hout o' dure-knobs, 'n' fatten 'em an sawdoost."

Now I had always experienced a consuming desire to own a farm, and raise chickens and Jersey cattle, and lambs with bells and blue ribbons on their necks, and merry milkmaids with short dresses, and wands crisscrossed with bright ribbon in their hands, and large blue rosettes on their fairy slippers. It might be that Nick was the messenger of fate to lead me to the much desired Utopia.

"How would you like to go into partnership with me, Nick?" I asked him.

"Weel, 'Enry, an' 'ow wouldst tha divide?" queried Nick shrewdly, while a hideous smile overspread his nut-cracker face.

"Well, Nick," I said, "I will furnish the money, you raise the chickens, and at the end of the season, we will go snacks."

"Aw reet, 'Enry," he said, "th' art fairer than Hi thot ower lawyer would be"; and with that I reached down and Nick reached up, and we shook hands on the partnership.

The next day Nick informed me that Johnny had allowed him the use of a quarter acre of land for a chicken-yard, and secured from me enough money to purchase posts and wire for a fence thereunto to appertain and belong.

For two or three days Nick worked tremendously, and then appeared at my office and obtained, not without some difficulty, a further stipend for the purpose of procuring setters and eggs. Having bled me freely he departed in great good humor, remarking as he closed the door, —

"'Enry, we'll fill the 'ole bloomin' town wi' cheekins."

The next day he passed the office driving Johnny's old white mare, hitched to a rattle cart containing an immense dry-goods box, upon which Nick was perched like Punch on the top of a circus van. He was followed by Johnny's savage dog, which took advantage of the day of freedom to pitch into all strange dogs; and Nick was obliged frequently to climb from his perch and with a cart-stake to rush into a whirlwind of fighting curs and a medley of objurgatory sounds something like this: "'I theer! 'I! blawst tha bloomin' heyes, ugr-r-r-yi-yi-ugr-r-r-raugh-o-raugh-thump-whack-down tha Tige-yi-yi-ugr-r-r-raugh-thump-whack-yi-yi-dom tha hide — coom awa noo!" And then, having temporarily restored peace, he would climb on his van and proceed until the next interruption, when he would again descend, and with the assistance of the dogs rehearse the entire programme.

Toward evening, as I was coming out of the office, I heard a most terrific rattling, barking,

and squawking, and from down the street, amid a cloud of dust, came the old white mare, urged to her full speed. On the box sat Nick, who had taken the precaution to chain the dog in the wagon, from which position the animal tugged and barked at a half score of excited dogs that surrounded the wagon, swearing vigorously in dog language at their assailant of the morning.

On seeing me, Nick pulled up so suddenly as to hurl the dog heels-over-head, while he himself narrowly escaped shooting over the old mare's head, and the collar of that patient animal went to her ears.

"Got thirty o' 'em, 'Enry, but 'ad to pay a 'ell of a price. 'Ens is gone hup," he shrieked; and away he went clattering down the street, while I mused apprehensively over what his idea of "a 'ell of a price" might be.

The next day he made a further demand on me for funds wherewith to purchase eggs and supplies, and for a time I heard no more of Nick. I had expressed to him some fear that his vigorous measures of the day before might have shaken some of the hens' determination, or seriously impaired their maternal instincts, but was reassured when he remarked that it was "Heasy enow to make a 'en set, if a mon knowed 'ow."

A few days before the expected arrival of the chicks, I went down to the farm to inspect his

plant and methods. His idea was original, amusing, and effective. In a spacious and well-ventilated room he had arranged a series of boxes containing the nests of straw, upon each of which a hen was thrust, with a ventilated cover of boards super-imposed; and a huge stone upon that served to keep straw, hen, and eggs firmly in place. Each day the hens were liberated in relays, allowed twenty minutes to feed, drink, dust and stretch, and at the expiration of the recess, were chased, caught, and re-imprisoned amid a chorus of squawks, a shower of dust and feathers, and original outbursts of language from Nick.

In spite of this rough method, his success was phenomenal, and about four hundred chickens arrived in due time. A few days previous to their arrival Nick had made a further demand for funds to purchase barrels, corn-meal, cracked corn, wheat-screenings, baker's waste, barley, and other necessary supplies.

The barrels were arranged facing the east, the open ends flush with the ground, the closed ends depressed a few inches. I demurred to this arrangement fearing the effect of the east wind, but was silenced when Nick replied, —

"Aye, mon, doost tha not know th' soon cooms oop i' th' east? An 't is th' soon thot makes cheeks grow."

This seemed truly plausible and I subsided.

And now for a while the affairs of the partnership flourished. The chickens throve, Nick throve, and the venture seemed in a fair way to be remunerative in the extreme. To be sure we lost a few chicks by the incursions of an immense gray rat, which Nick caught red-handed and stamped into a furry flapjack. Certain other animals in the neighborhood also disappeared, leaving no trace of their whereabouts.

"Johnny say, it do beat 'ell wheer th' owd tomcat 'a' gone," said Nick one day; "but 'Enry," — and here Nick lowered his voice, glanced apprehensively around, and whispered hoarsely, "Nick could tell tha summat about it."

Frequent visits of my partner at my house and office kept me posted in the progress of partnership affairs. These visits were at times a trifle inopportune, as when on one occasion we were entertaining the good pastor of the church at tea, Nick suddenly appeared at the dining-room door with the astonishing information that a "blawsted mink 'ad killed five cheeks, hand th' owd yeller 'en 'ad killed three, like a dash dashed owd fu'."

On another occasion Nick bolted into my court in great excitement, and disturbed my judicial poise by loudly informing me that "Johnny 'ad fun' out aboot th' owd tomcat an' was a raisin' 'ell."

But on the whole fortune smiled on the partnership and the partners. Yet, alas, one night, when the chicks were about as big as half-grown pigeons, a driving storm of wind and rain came. All night the wind roared from the east, the rain poured, the loose shutters banged, and my thoughts wandered to the partnership assets.

The morning dawned bright and beautiful, and at five o'clock I came downstairs. On opening the side door I nearly fell over the convulsed frame of my small partner, sitting doubled up on the threshold, plunged in unavailing grief.

"What in the world is the matter, Nick?" I asked.

"'Enry," gasped Nick, "Hi want ye to coom down to th' 'ouse, hand take hevery blank-dashed cheekin to 'ell wi' ye. The business 'as gone to 'ell!" And Nick lifted up his voice and fairly squalled in the extremity of his sorrow.

Although bursting with laughter at his ridiculous appearance, I did my best to soothe him, and finally he became composed sufficiently to lead the way toward the scene of our financial collapse.

Not a word of explanation would Nick give, only, "Tha'll see soon enow, 'Enry. Hi thot Hi was a gude 'en man, but tha knowst more nor Hi."

Arrived at the farm a most ridiculous and as-

tonishing sight met my gaze. Arranged in perfect order in rows across the yard were about three hundred and fifty chickens, stiff, cold, and drenched, with their poor little legs sticking straight in air as if each had raised both hands to call public attention to its individual case. The rain had been driven by the east wind into the depressed barrels and had drowned nearly our entire colony.

The sight of the orderly rows of deceased chicks, and of Nick's frightfully solemn face, was too much, and I sat down on a barrel and roared and roared until Nick began to be infected and a hideous smile crept over his funny old face.

"Weel, 'Enry," he said finally, "'ow tha canst laugh 't is more than Hi can do. Hi'll 'ave no mon lose money by me. So take th' rest o' 'em awa."

It took me some time to convince him that as a square man he must not desert a partner in distress, or a sinking ship; and before I left he had visibly cheered up and was busily engaged in burying the dead.

No further calamity happened, and early in the fall I received my dividend in the shape of about twenty of the gauntest, long-leggedest chickens the world ever saw. When the flood had rushed in on them, they had weathered the storm on the principle of the survival of the fittest, which

in their cases meant the long-legged ones. But their constitutions had been so taxed by the long hours of immersion, that their bodies had not kept pace with the abnormal development of their shanks.

Most of them were roosters, and whenever one would crow it would fall prostrate with the effort and lie there kicking until up-ended by some kindly hand. And they were compelled to sit down when they ate or drank in order to reach their food without falling headlong into the dish. And their voices, — such voices! like nothing in the world so much as Nick's laugh.

When I commented on their unusual development, Nick remarked with a humorous twinkle in his eye and a shrewd twist of his mouth, —

"Ay, mon, tha shouldst na find fault wi' thot, th' art built graidely lang-leggit thaself."

The partnership books, consisting of chalk memoranda on the inside of the harness-room door, were duly examined and found correct. What these twenty curiosities cost me I have never told. I never shall. Neither Nick nor I cared to discuss that part of it, but we made somewhat elaborate plans to try again the next year and to retrieve our shattered fortunes.

Poor Nick! he died that winter of a sudden attack of pneumonia. Before he died he asked for me; but I was away, and did not know

of his sickness and death until after the funeral.

Poor old Nick! A weazened, crooked, bandy-legged man. But you had a good, faithful heart that has, I trust, found 'Arry.

CHAPTER VIII

SETBACKS

COLD and snow, however exhilarating and beautiful, cannot last forever; and it is well they cannot, for toward the end of February, when the sun begins to run higher and rise earlier, one feels a strange longing for a breath of the spring, for a smell of the moist earth.

But March comes, frequently with deceptive mildness, when the streets run rivers of muddy water, the snow turns dull and dingy, the earth appears in sheltered, sunny places on the banking, the English sparrows fight and chatter and shriek in the naked trees, and in the evening the drip, drip, drip of water from the eaves lulls one to rest with dreams of spring.

But in the morning what a change has taken place! A bitter wind roars like a lion in the trees, the air seems full of needles, the sun shines brightly, but does not warm. Not a sparrow is in sight. Huddled behind blinds and shutters and whatever serves as a shelter from the searching wind, they puff themselves into balls of feathers, and wait for warmer weather.

"Ac venti, velut agmine facto,
Qua data porta ruunt et terras turbine perflant."

Again a few days of mild and sunny forenoons and a chill creeping into the air in the afternoon, with thin needles of ice threading the little pools of water in the road, followed the next day by a heavy snow-storm which changes into rain and sleet.

But one day, and I never forget that day, a clear liquid warble is heard in the air, a wandering disembodied voice, the first spring song of the bluebird. I am thrilled and look everywhere, but in vain. I hear the clear notes but cannot see the musician, until all at once he alights on a fence-post, or on the roof of a shed, and warbles his flute-like tones.

And one warm Sunday a few days later I walk into the garden. The soil is drying a bit in the higher places, but is soft and muddy in the hollows. The sun shines warmly, a Sabbath stillness is over everything. The hens prate cheerfully, a cow tethered in the sun in front of a neighbor's barn lows comfortably, the shrill call of a robin is heard, and spring really seems here.

The first duty of an experienced gardener is to make hotbeds and therein cultivate beets, turnips, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, tomatoes, and other vegetables. So I sent for some planks, sawed them the right lengths, and spent a part

of several days and the whole of several evenings in the furnace-room of the cellar, pounding and hammering the parts together and screwing on glass covers with hinges.

I made three of these beds, and having arranged suitable sites for them on the south side of the barn, secured Mike as chief motive-power, and started to hoist them out. Then it was that I found the cellar door was several inches too narrow to allow them to pass through, whichever way I turned them. So I was forced to take them apart and reunite their component parts on the outside. This took so much time that it was not until two days later that I had them in place.

I had been told that greenhouse or conservatory compost would make excellent growing soil, and so I imported a few loads at considerable expense from a neighboring florist, procured seed, and sowed, as I was afterwards informed, enough seed to furnish a market-garden of an hundred acres. It was a most delightful pastime, and in an astonishingly short time the tiny garden-shoots of thousands of young plants were peeping above the soil.

It was delightful to see how warm and comfortable it was inside that frame. Indeed, it was necessary to raise the tops during the sunny days, to avoid burning the plants. And I could almost see them grow from hour to hour.

For about ten days I guarded them as carefully as one would tend a new-born babe, and was rewarded tenfold by the astonishing progress the plants made. One warm sunshiny day I opened the windows about halfway. Toward night a warm, moist south wind began blowing, and before dark a fine, almost summer-like rain was falling, just the thing the plants needed. So I opened the covers wider, that the plants might get the benefit of the rain without the danger of a heavy drenching fall, which might wash them out of the ground. The next morning I found that the unexpected had happened. The wind had veered around to the northeast, it had become bitterly cold, a biting northeaster was blowing, and my plants were frozen stiff.

It was a week before the ground thawed enough to plant more seeds; but I persevered, and, in about ten days after planting, had a second crop growing finely.

I had also improved my time and had engaged a farmer with a yoke of oxen to plough my land. I had considerable difficulty in getting a yoke of oxen, because that useful animal, the ox, was an exceedingly rare bird in our vicinity. But I always wanted my farm ploughed by oxen, and I persevered until I found a yoke. It was somewhat more expensive than the quicker method of ploughing with horses, but I preferred oxen.

And so, when they arrived, I persuaded the farmer to allow me to drive.

How often had I admired the skill shown by the wielders of the goad in managing their unwieldy charges. Some of those old-time farmers were exceedingly graceful in using the goad. How easily they would slide it across the shoulders of the near ox and prod the off ox into activity. So I fain would do; and when, after setting the plough, the horny-handed yeoman grasped the handles and signaled me to go ahead, I poised the goad, made certain circular motions with it in the air, and in deference to time-honored but obsolete custom, vociferated, "Hubbuck thar, huggolden, hibboad, whoa, heish"; and they settled into the yoke, and mellow sounds of rending earth followed.

This was delightful, and at the end of the furrow I turned them under his instructions, and started again across the field. Now I noticed that the off ox was shirking and allowing his mate to do most of the pulling, and to bring him up even I slid the goad across the near ox's shoulder, leaned my weight on it, and jabbed him powerfully with the brad, at the same time letting out a hoarse "Haw!" that waked the echoes.

I have never known a draught animal to respond so quickly to encouragement as did this one, for the moment he felt the brad he bellowed

loudly, stiffened his tail, and broke into a lumbering gallop, dragging his mate, the plough, and the ploughman in his wake. The plough, caught by the nose, turned over, the ploughman, clinging to the handles like a drowning man to a straw, shot into the air like a catapult, turning a complete somersault, while the oxen, racing across the fields, brought up one on each side of an oak tree, which stopped their mad flight.

The yeoman showed more irritation over the affair than I thought its importance warranted, and said things that were calculated to pain one's finer feelings. Indeed, he absolutely refused to continue his engagement under any terms whatever, and to my great regret departed without even saying good-by. And I had so wanted to learn to drive oxen! And now I might never get another chance. It was too bad.

SHOT INTO THE AIR LIKE A CATAPULT

CHAPTER IX

MORE SETBACKS

DURING all of this time my hotbeds had been thriving, and although my neighbors were busy planting their gardens, I had done no more than lay out a good-sized vegetable garden, and have it horse-ploughed with the rest of the field. This I harrowed with Lady M. I knew that by transplanting my artificially cultivated vegetables I would be far in advance of my neighbors in the growth of my garden, and so I was in no hurry to jeopardize my plants with another cold snap.

I am not entirely correct when I say I had done no more than lay out a garden patch. I had noticed with much disgust and concern that the first green things that appeared were the hideous and unsightly burdocks, which require no cultivation, and which, if not promptly checked, spread like the Asiatic cholera and kill out every other kind of vegetation.

So I acted with great promptness and thoroughness, and not only cut them down with a scythe, but spent the greater part of a sunny afternoon in carefully grubbing up each individual root,

and burning the entire collection in a bonfire of kerosene-soaked refuse.

I regarded this as the best day's work I had accomplished on the farm, until I found some days later that I had utterly eradicated what was probably the finest bed of pie-plant in the community, and of all plants in the world, pie-plant was the one I most loved.

I was quite cast down about this, and when this calamity was followed by a succession of trials and reverses in my farm labor, I felt almost disposed to close my house and take rooms at a hotel. First, I forgot again, so careful was I not unduly to expose the growing plants to the sudden changes of our Northern climate, to raise the glass covers for the whole of an unusually warm and sunny day, and as the beds were practically air-tight, and the drawing power of the glass very effective, I was again dismayed to find the plants wilted and lifeless, but this time from extreme heat and dryness.

Then, to add to my discomfort and discouragement, a long cold rain set in, which was followed by chill overcast skies; and when at last the sun condescended to shine, the witch-grass which the weather had stimulated to its utmost, while checking every other growth, had made such enormous increase, that the cultivation of my field had become an impossibility.

The thorough harrowing I had given the garden patch alone had saved it for further experiments. Well, I was disappointed, as I had looked forward to at least an acre and a half of corn, beans, and squashes.

So I set to work in the garden, and planted sweet corn, lettuce, beets, cauliflower, carrots, pole-beans, and sowed nasturtiums the whole length of the yard, or about three hundred feet.

The green things were showing in my neighbors' gardens, and I was far behind them, but I fondly hoped that by extra care and cultivation I might arrive first. But in order not to be entirely distanced, I went to town and bought at a grocery store several boxes of tomatoes and cabbage-plants, and set them out in regular order in the most conspicuous part of the garden.

I also bought a couple of hundred strawberry-plants, cleared a patch of witch-grass by actually picking it out with a fine-toothed comb, and set them out in regular cadence.

The field was now quite overgrown with witch-grass, and much to my astonishment a great variety of other weeds were shooting up. Evidently the dressing placed on the land the winter before had been filled with seeds. A casual examination of the specimens disclosed pigweed, ragweed, live-forever, chickweed, dandelion, purslane, nettle, plantain, skunk-cabbage, bulrush, as well

as cucumber, pumpkin, squash, toadstool, mushroom, and mullein leaf.

This worried me a good deal until my friend Daniel informed me that provided I mowed the growth before the seeds became ripe, I would get a noble crop of hay the second year.

A few days after this, and in the first week of May, I noticed one morning that my tomato-plants had suddenly wilted. I pulled one up and examined the root for wire-worm, cut-worm or other subterranean varmint that might have preyed upon the damask of its cheek, but could find nothing. Then I bent to my work, and on my knees, examined them one by one with the utmost care; and before I got half down the first row my search was rewarded by finding a striped bug, evidently the potato-bug of contemporaneous history.

Certainly eternal vigilance is the price of a successful market-garden. I saddled Polly and flew down town, grossly violating the statutory regulations in respect to the speed limit of equestrians.

I bought a little green package of Paris green, and, remounting, flew back even faster. I mixed up a pailful of the required consistency, and showered the poor limp plants. Then I dressed and went down town, anticipating a marked change in the appearance of things on my return.

True enough, when I did return I found that a change had taken place, but not just the change I had anticipated, for two of my hens had scaled their wire fence, imbibed freely of what was left of the contents of the pail, and now lay lifeless and with their claws sticking stiffly in the air as if imploring pity, while the plants were more limp than before. I again sprinkled the plants, put the pail away in safety, buried the hens, and had lunch.

That night there was no change in the flabbiness of the plants, but considerable discoloration was perceptible. The next morning they were so black that I almost gave up hope, but administered another sprinkling and left them.

At noon I again consulted my friend Daniel, who viewed the remains, asking some pointed questions, and then said: "Why, you blooming lunatic, did n't you know that we had a sharp frost yesterday morning? Well, there was, and your tomato-plants were frost-killed. If you only got up in the morning as I do, you would n't have been spending the time and money in poisoning potato-bugs when they ain't hatched yet, and won't be for two months."

CHAPTER X

GRAMP AND THE GAMECOCK

ONE thing that made farm-life additionally interesting and pleasant was that my father had moved his family directly opposite my house; and as he took a hearty interest in farming, although I have reason to believe he knew but little more than I did about it, he took occasion to come over about every day to give me gratuitous advice.

Now it is one of the peculiarities of that delightfully frank old gentleman to fail to recognize the fact that I have grown either in body or mind since the time I was about twelve years of age, and so he frequently criticises me severely, even going to the extent of fervent oratory whenever my methods of managing my affairs do not coincide with his views, and whenever a very considerable amount of obstinacy that I have inherited from this same choleric gentleman, impels me to have my own way.

I do not find fault with his peculiarities in this regard. Indeed, I rather enjoy them and recognize them as a sort of paternal privilege. More

than this, I know perfectly well from my experience on one occasion (when I arrived breathless and just in time forcibly to prevent an ambitious attempt by him to thrash a man half his age, and fully his size, who had intimated casually that my legal attainments were not quite up to the mark) that he would not tolerate any criticism of me from any one else.

Now my respected father spent a good deal of his spare time in superintending operations on my farm, and in that respect was of great assistance to me. There was, however, one thing in which I was disposed to criticise his efficiency.

Most of the unemployed help in our town spent a large percentage of their time in the House of Correction for drunkenness, and in the intervals between sentences worked at odd jobs until they received pay enough to go on a convivial " bat," and when rounded up in the Police Court, took whatever sentence awaited them with cheerful acquiescence.

Knowing this, I made it a rule never to pay laborers of this class until they had finished their work. Now, these men knew me from bitter experience, and also knew my respected father for reasons of a contrary nature; and so whenever they felt the desire for alcoholic stimulants coming over them, they found no difficulty in wheedling an advance "on account" from the

old gentleman, upon their sworn statement that they wanted it for the necessaries of life; whereupon they, to the old gentleman's surprise, at once proceeded to exhilarate, and would frequently return in a most hideous state of inebriation, and endeavor to argue the matter with me until I would be obliged to have them removed by the police. And so the farming industry in our particular location would be brought to a standstill.

Again, father believed that the domestic fowl would yield more returns if allowed to range freely over my premises, at least until seed was sowed. I rather favored his point of view, and thought that a flock of neat fowls looked well on a lawn or about the buildings.

But my wife took the opposite view, and showed a deplorable pride of opinion in the matter, and the frequent spectacle of an agile woman in "specs" pursuing squawking fowls with a broom, added much to the joy of the neighbors.

Now, I was bound to keep fowls, and my wife was bound they should not be kept on the lawn. She was unquestionably right in the matter, and so a compromise was entered into. The fowls were to be let out only at stated intervals, when they could be under the charge of the old gentleman, who engaged to see that they did not trespass on the lawn or dooryard.

This seemed a fair and equitable arrangement, and was entered into with much enthusiasm by the old gentleman, to whom sitting in the sun, smoking, and watching hired men and hens "scratch gravel" was a most congenial employment.

He was particularly pleased with the gamecock, and never tired of watching it and extolling its brilliant colors and its great courage. And when that valiant bird sent an inquisitive dog yelping from the premises, and chased the family cat, spitting and swearing, up a tree, he was outspoken in his joy.

It was his custom to let the pens of fowls out at different times, and in about an hour to lure them back to their quarters with handfuls of grain. In this way he had established considerable familiarity with the fowls, which bred in the gamecock that contempt which is the usual result of familiarity.

One day in following his regular programme the old gentleman found the grain-bin almost entirely empty, so much so that he was obliged to immerse his head and shoulders in the bin and scrape around on the bottom with a grain measure to get enough for the fowls. While this was happening the gamecock stepped around the corner of the barn-door in quest of adventure. Seeing this unusual object, he stopped to con-

template it, and at the sight his wrath grew. Here was an unknown something that apparently needed a lesson. It was alive because it moved. That was enough. It defied him. He would investigate it promptly.

And investigation with a gamecock meant instant and vigorous action. The fighting bird spread its hackles, took a short run, launched itself in the air, and drove its sharp spurs home with all the power of its strong wings. The result was equally astonishing to the gamecock and to his innocent and unsuspecting antagonist.

With a yell that could have been heard half a mile, the old gentleman straightened up, bumping his head resoundingly against an overhanging beam. With a vigorous cuss word he launched the grain measure at the gamecock, and followed this with a hammer that lamed an innocent pullet for life.

When I returned from the office that night I heard his views of the transaction, and it is but justice to him to state that I never heard a more cogent or dramatic recapitulation of the affair. That night when all was dark I boxed the gamecock up and sent him away, where I trust he has become the founder of a long line of beautiful birds. But it was many days before the old gentleman resumed his seat on the bench.

CHAPTER XI

THE GRANGE

ONE evening in June, I was sitting on a bench contemplating the growth of the vegetable garden, the astonishing developments of the pigweed in the field, and the inferiority of our neighbor's crops, when I was approached by a friend from the country, the successful manager of a productive and extensive farm, and my prospective membership in the Grange was solicited. Perhaps I am in error to say that he requested me to apply for admission to the organization, for in fact he so managed the conversation that I was the actual suppliant.

The Grange in our state is a most powerful and extensive organization, probably having as many members, as much enthusiasm, and fully as many enjoyable festivals as any other organization, and it is certainly a privilege to belong to it; and so, when it was casually intimated that my ownership of so extensive a farm as my two-acre patch appeared to be might qualify me for admission into that society, I was at once inter-

ested. I was a little proud of my success as an amateur farmer, although I did not care much about estimating the cost of my garden and my other farm property. It was also suggested by this friend that the Grange exercised a most powerful political influence, and that any one desiring political preferment could do no better than to apply for admission. I replied that I had no political ambition whatever; that I preferred to be a plain and unobtrusive farmer, and live a life as near to the soil as is compatible with the life of a country attorney.

I was, however, prepared to follow any method to compass my ambition to become a member of the Grange, and when I asked what the requisites were for admission, I was informed that good character, and ability to pay dues and to perform manual labor in farm-work were the chief requisites. As I had never been detected in any offense that would subject me to the criminal laws of the state, and as my moral character was not sufficiently stained to endanger my prospects, I was informed by my friend that these two requisites would pass muster; but that I must show by actual demonstration that I was able to do at least one day's farm-work, and my friend admitted that he had some doubts on that subject.

On professing my willingness to try to follow him in a day's work, he suggested that if I would

come to his house the next morning, prepared to begin work at his usual hour and work all day with him in the corn-field without "blenching from the helm," he would recommend my admission, and after complimenting me on the excellency of my garden patch, satirically remarking that we were "goin' t' hev a powerful crap er pigweed," he went his way.

The next morning I was up at three o'clock, fed Polly, put on a suit of brown overalls with jersey, a pair of stout shoes, and an old felt hat. At half-past three I had fed and saddled that animal, and with hoe in hand prepared to mount.

Now, Polly is an extremely nervous animal and somewhat aristocratic in her taste, and she strongly objected to being mounted by any one dressed as I was. She was also deeply apprehensive that I was intending to give her a "bat" with that hoe; consequently when I approached to mount her she backed away, wheeled, and despite my utmost efforts, would not remain still long enough for me to get foot in the stirrup. Finally, after leaning the hoe up against a tree and backing her into a corner I managed to mount. I then approached the tree by devious ways, and not without great difficulty succeeded in getting near enough to grasp the hoe, when she bolted.

Down Front Street she went like lightning, narrowly escaping shipwreck in rounding a cor-

ner that so many years before had proved disastrous to me when as a boy we raced the minister. As I went over Great Bridge, white-robed figures leaned from the windows, evidently thinking that either Paul Revere or the headless horseman was once more on the war-path.

By the mile stretch on Hampton Road we swept like a simoom, when, as my flying steed was somewhat winded, I pulled her to half-speed and turned down the long hill leading to Kensington.

Although the distance was about four miles from my house, I did the same in what I believe to be record time, and arrived astride my foaming charger and still clinging to the hoe which had been the chief cause of her mad flight.

I aroused my farmer friend from his beauty sleep, much to his disgust, and after breakfasting with him went to the corn-field and there wrought manfully throughout the day. Although I had the advantage of my friend in many ways, he being a small man and fully twice my age, yet I was put to great straits to keep up with him, and when supper-time came was tremendously fagged. After supper, when I was contemplating a leisurely and pleasant ride home, a terrific thunder-storm came up, and I dashed home in the alternating glare and blackness of a summer storm in somewhat less time than I went over. My load, however, was lighter, for I thought both hands

would be fully occupied in restraining my uncertain steed and preserving my balance. The next day I was in a condition of stiffness quite impossible to describe, but a few days later it wore off, and I was notified by my friend that my application for admission to the Grange had been favorably received and acted upon, and that I was to present myself for initiation at a certain date. I would be violating the secrecy enjoined on me by the rules of the organization to say anything about the initiation. It is sufficient to say that I passed it and lived.

I felt greatly honored a short time afterwards, and after attending one or two meetings, at being notified to deliver an address before the meeting of the Pomona Grange, which was to be held in our town in about a week after my invitation to speak. To say that I jumped at the chance would be expressing it feebly. Invitations to speak in public were quite rare in my life, and the only speeches that I had made were arguments before juries, judges, or referees, in matters pertaining to my profession, and these, I might say in passing, were not sufficiently numerous to mark me among successful advocates; and so for a week I neglected my family, my farm, and my office, while composing an address of marked excellence, and calculated to make my position as a member of the Grange solid.

The exercises were to be held in a large hall at two o'clock in the afternoon, and the oration and collation were to be preceded by a business meeting. Shortly after two o'clock I arrived at the hall, attempted to enter, and finding the door fastened, announced my presence by a sounding knock. In reply I heard some one from within informing those present that an alarm was made at the outer court, or words to that effect.

I imagined that orders were given from within by those in authority to ascertain the reasons for the alarm, and to be prepared to repel any unauthorized ruffian who might attempt to enter the sacred precincts of the Grange Hall. I felt assured that such was the case when the door opened and the largest man I had ever beheld appeared on the threshold and hoarsely inquired what my purpose was.

I shrank perceptibly before this dignified and powerful individual, and informed him with much humility that I wanted to come in. He in return demanded the pass-word, and in my confusion I was utterly unable to give it. I informed him timidly that I had forgotten the pass-word, but if he would kindly furnish me with one I would immediately return it.

In reply he laid his hand in a wholly fraternal manner upon my shoulder, called me brother, opened the door, and to my great confusion,

marched me the length of the hall, between rows of staring men and curious women, to the platform, where I was confronted by a small but imposing gentleman who sat at a desk, clad in the official regalia of the Order and surrounded by other officials of equal gorgeousness, whereupon the large gentleman made the following address: "Most Worshipful" something or other, I have forgotten what, "I present to your official notice this young man, whom I have cause to believe and do believe is a worthy member of this most worthy organization, but who, unfortunately, has been so unmindful of his duty as not to have furnished himself with the requisites for admission, or, in other words, does not know the pass-word. What are your distinguished wishes in relation to the case?"

"Most Worthy" something or other, it would be a violation of the rules of the Order to say just what, "you may remove the alleged worthy member to the waiting-room, and inform him, should he adduce sufficient proof to you of his membership in this order, of the pass-word, that when the necessary and important business of this meeting is finished he will then be readmitted."

During this exchange of weighty civilities I had been growing hot and cold by turns, as I was naturally of a modest disposition and was greatly

embarrassed at my undue prominence and by the curious and amused glances of several hundred "fair women and brave men"; and so when I was conducted stumblingly to the ante-room, and was about to be subjected to a searching inquiry, I excused myself for a moment, and struck out for home; and, as far as I know, that organization is still awaiting my return and the delivery of that famous speech.

CHAPTER XII

TURKEYS AND A FOOTRACE

DID you ever think that one of the main reasons of the difficulty our farmers have of realizing more than a moderate competency from the cultivation of a New England farm is the want of a good market?

The cities and large towns are few in number and so small, and the Boston markets for farm products of the perishable kinds are supplied by the larger, nearer, and more fertile farms and market gardens of suburban towns.

But for hardy perennials, such as chickens, ducks, lambs, goats, calves, and woodchucks, there is, and ever has been, a fairly good market, and much money has been made in the cultivation of such products.

Thirty or forty years ago, and as far prior thereto as the memory of man runneth, even to the time the first white man landed in America and on the solar plexus of the amber-hued aborigine, the sound of the turkey was heard in the land and vied with the song of the birds, the nasal tones

of the lusty husbandman berating his sluggish cattle, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, and the grunting and squealing of fat pigs, all of which went to make up a pastoral symphony or bucolic *tout ensemble.* Daily the flock of bronze beauties descended to the fields and woods, where they industriously put in from twelve to fourteen working hours in hunting down grasshoppers, katydids, crickets, and other vermin, and nightly did they festoon the apple trees, the roofs of sheds and barns, and the seats of farm-wagons with their plump bodies.

In those days the raising and marketing of turkeys formed one of the principal sources of income for the farmer or the farmer's helpmeet. They were raised in two ways. The most profitable method was to enter your neighbor's orchard when the family were asleep, and carefully and without noise raise the drowsy turkeys from their roosting places, and market them in a distant county before morning broke.

The element of chance that entered into the transaction and occasionally involved those interested in this industry in expensive legal proceedings rendered this method slightly unpopular, although the percentage of profit was very considerable.

The other and more popular method was to allow the woman of the household to take entire

charge of the flock, and to hold the proceeds for her personal use and adornment.

To this circumstance the beautiful sables that have been handed down in country families owe their origin. Our grandmothers, great- and great-great-grandmothers developed great fleetness of foot in avoiding the lightning charge of irate cock-turkeys weighing forty or more pounds, and a wide range of geographical knowledge in seeking and housing the immature flocks when a rain-cloud appeared on the horizon.

Indeed, many of our long-distance pedestrians and short-distance sprinters of to-day have come to their full powers by a careful cultivation of a direct inheritance from athletic great-great-grandmothers. But of late years turkey-raising as a local industry has not flourished, and the New Hampshire turkey is almost extinct.

What is the reason? One has it that the increasing liberality of the modern farmer husband is such that his wife obtains her heart's desire simply for the asking, and is not obliged to raise live-stock for a living. Another, that marriages between the different sexes in the turkey family have been allowed within those degrees of consanguinity that in the human species are prohibited by law, and the result has been the production of a race of turkey degenerates predisposed to paresis, suicide, and kindred ills.

Still another says that an insect known as the borer, equipped with a cast-iron, auger-like proboscis, working on a swivel, bores holes in the bird's crop and lets its contents exude with the innocent life of the victim.

This man affirms that another insect bores into the ears of the young bird and drives it to suicide. One says it is over-feeding, another starvation. One advises leaving the birds to nature, another, highly artificial measures. It reminds me of the old definition of climate as given by our old friend Guyot's "Common School Geography."

"Climate is heat and cold, moisture and dryness, healthfulness or unhealthfulness." I well remember my childish wonder that one term could embrace so many contrary characteristics.

In thinking matters over, I finally became convinced that the opportunity had arrived to make my name, like that of our national emblem, "Known and honored throughout the world." To invent, discover, and develop, to patent or copyright a process for preserving the life of the New Hampshire turkey, was to put it into the power of every farmer to remove the mortgage from his ancestral acres, to put money in his purse, to give his daughters lessons in elocution, and to allow his wife to join the "Daughters," and to live happy ever afterwards. Perhaps as "Shute, the turkey man," my name might go

pinwheeling through the ages to come, neck and neck with the names of Buffalo Jones, Scroggs the Wyandotte man, the inventor of Mennen's Toilet Powder, and kindred celebrities.

So I invested in a pair of mammoth bronzes that were displayed in a window of a Boston store, and awaited their arrival with ill-concealed anxiety.

For three nights subsequent to the purchase of the birds I drove to the station with a huge crate, which I had fastened to the pung so firmly that it prevented me from using the sleigh for any other purpose, and for three nights I returned disappointed. On the fourth night I found them waiting in a crate fully as large, upon which freight-bills were due sufficient to freight a horse to the Pacific slope. This, with the amount already paid for the birds, made my original investment somewhat disquieting. However, I loaded the new crate on the old one, tied it as well as I could with the hitch-rope, climbed stiffly to the seat, and started for home.

Respected reader, did you ever try to drive a hard-bitted horse with one hand and hold in two crates weighing about a ton each, and laden with shifting ballast in the shape of agile and wildly terrified turkeys? It is a trick, let me tell you. I covered the distance between the station and my house in several seconds less than the record, and

pulled both arms a foot or more beyond their normal reach while so doing.

I was so anxious to release my turkeys that I neglected to unhook the mare, and when after considerable difficulty I dragged forth the cock-turkey by one hind-leg, he beat my hat over my ears with his huge wings, covered me with dust and dirt, and so frightened the mare that she went through the narrow door like a flash of lightning, leaving a pung with broken shafts and a goodly part of the harness on the outside.

I was too much occupied with the turkey to pay much attention to the mare, and after a brief season of collar-and-elbow, Græco-Roman, hitch-and-trip, and catch-as-catch-can, I dragged the unwilling old bird from his retirement, left him in the loft, swelling and spreading, and dashed down after the hen, suddenly reflecting that I had left the crate open.

I found her standing in the open, with outstretched neck and tail half-spread. Awed by my commanding appearance, or possibly by the fact that I had so many feathers on me that she mistook me for a strange turkey-cock of disreputable appearance, she started off at a high rate of speed and I followed at a hand-gallop. The going was heavy and I soon overtook her, fell over her prostrate body, half-buried in the snow, and arose with her clasped to my bosom.

Before I could catch her by the legs she, with ill-directed but vigorous clawings, gouged a long strip from my countenance, leaving an unsightly scar that remained for several weeks, and gave rise to the rumor that my home life was unhappy.

She was not nearly as handsome or as heavy as her mate, but that she was dear to him he demonstrated by furiously attacking me when I appeared in the loft, and tearing a large hole in my trousers, in return for which I kicked him several yards with some considerable deftness, and left him to smooth his ruffled plumage and temper, while I sought warm water, Pears' soap, court-plaster, and a clothes-brush.

As it was early in March, when cock-turkeys are about as savage as four-year-old Jersey bulls, I warned the different members of our family to give him the right of way.

I soon found that he was at heart a most pusillanimous poltroon, for a small gamecock that roosted in the loft, so far from being terrified by his appearance and loud boasts, thoroughly whipped him, and drove him headlong down one of the grain chutes, whence we rescued him by tearing away the planks, empurpled and nearly dead from a rush of blood to the head.

Although an arrant coward, he put up such a menacing front, boasted so loudly, and turned so red-faced in his anger that he impressed the

members of my family, the neighbors, and the populace generally, as a very dangerous antagonist.

My daughter, like her father extraordinarily gifted in the way of legs, had no difficulty in distancing the old fellow, and dodging his fierce rushes, and the daily sight of a very funny young lady with spindly legs flying across the yard pursued by a red-faced, gobbling turkey, added much to the interest with which the neighborhood viewed him.

My wife, however, had no patience with the young lady or any one else who was afraid of an old turkey, and expressed great confidence that the day old Tom came at her would be a very sad day for the poor old fellow. This naturally made me look forward to the inevitable meeting between the mistress of the house and the master of the yard as a prospective treat.

One day I was in the barn and saw the usual stern chase swinging its way across the yard. Scarcely had the house-door slammed before it opened again, and there strode forth, with firm step and resolute manner, the lady of the house with the light of high purpose and the glint of warlike determination beaming through her specs. The old cock had retired some distance from the house, but drew up as the apparition approached.

As the meeting promised to be of some interest, I peeped through a window and prepared to get as much enjoyment out of the engagement as the nature of the circumstances would allow.

Straight toward old Tom came the lady with rapid and measured strides. Instantly he hoisted his tail, injected about a quart of scarlet war-paint into his head and neck, stuck every feather on end, and let out a fierce rolling gobble. The walk slowed down a bit, and the lady cut her smile of confidence down one half, but still advanced warily.

The gobbler then made a whining imitation of a watchman's rattle, laid the feathers of his neck flat until his head looked snaky, and took a few side steps toward his visitor.

"Shoo, you nasty thing! Shoo!! scat!!! go away!!!!" screamed the lady, stopping abruptly.

Old Tom whined like a dog, ending with a sort of bass croak that seemed to come from the pit of his stomach, then took a few more steps forward on tiptoe, and sounded the watchman's rattle, winding up with a fierce gobble.

"Go away, you nasty thing! Shoo!! scat!!!" shrieked the lady. "Oh, why don't somebody come? Oh-ee!! Oh-ee!! Get away!!" she shrieked vigorously, and somewhat improperly shaking her skirts, with marked scenic effect.

This was the chip on the shoulder, the chal-

lenge that an adult male turkey always takes up. With outstretched neck and hideous whine he charged, and with shrill shrieks the lady fled for the friendly shelter of the open portal. I have ridden on the "Flying Yankee," I have flashed down the toboggan slide, have shot or "shooted" the chutes, have twice been run away with when astride a bronco, have seen the fastest sprinter breast the tape in an even ten, have seen the two-minute pacer coming down the stretch abreast the thoroughbred runners, but never have I seen such a burst of speed as my wife put on that day. She fairly whizzed across the yard and disappeared into the house like a flash of jagged lightning, and the bang with which she slammed the door, echoed and reëchoed and drowned my coarse and unfeeling laughter and the delighted giggle of my irreverent daughter, who from a convenient window had viewed the proceedings with great enjoyment. Truly this turkey business was not a bad investment after all.

As spring approached, my turkey began to lay large pock-marked eggs with exceedingly rough shells, which I carefully secured and concealed from the prying eyes of the cook.

As soon as I had a sufficient number, I set them under two large fluffy hens and sternly repressed the maternal instinct of the turkey-hen, daily removing her forcibly, protestingly, flap-

pingly from her nest under a pile of brush, where she persistently sat on a couple of bricks. In due time the eggs under the hens hatched and the bricks under the turkey refused to hatch, but the enthusiasm of the old turkey-hen continued unabated. She seemed determined to hatch out terra cotta images, drain-tile, or something.

The little turks or poults were delightful little wild things, beautifully mottled, and on them I lavished the affection of a warm and ardent nature. On one of them, as an experiment, I lavished something even more ardent, for under the advice of a Granger friend I introduced a peppercorn into the epiglottis of an infant turk and watched the effect. It was instantaneous. The poor bird piped a shrill protest, turned flip-flaps, hand-springs, and cart-wheels, opened its beak, clawed at it with frenzied feet, rolled, ran, fell, and finally collapsed into a piteous little ball of down and died.

This experiment, at least, was not a success, except as an exterminator, and I had but fifteen poults instead of the original sixteen. I then put them in a well-sheltered place and fed them according to the best standards.

For a while all went well. They grew and throve, and I became very complacent over the matter. Too much so, I am afraid, for on my return from the office one day I found three of

them suffering from melancholia, with heads sunk on their breasts, and apparently indifferent to their surroundings. I at once powdered them thoroughly with insect powder, under which drastic treatment they promptly died without struggle or squeak.

A week later, four more passed peacefully away without apparent reason, and a week later cholera attacked the remainder. One by one they passed to the great hereafter. We found them in all places, in all positions. Some on their backs, with their feeble little claws outstretched in air, some huddled into corners, with heads drawn back over their shoulders, some curled up like balls of fur.

In vain I tried all the remedies in the poultry papers and in books. In vain I consulted wise sages and oracles in poultry-culture. It was useless; those turks were doomed from the moment of their entrance into a sinful world. In a month from their arrival nothing remained but bitter memories and a very inconsiderable addition to my compost-heap.

In the meantime the old cock, having much unoccupied time on his hands, and pining for the society of his wife, who was still sitting on the bricks under the brush-heap, was occupied in chasing defenseless women from the premises. Scarcely a day passed without a sally and a rescue.

In his blundering, well-meaning way he was doing a deal of good. The female book agent and subscription fairy fled from my premises as from a place accursed. The dark-complexioned lady of Armenian extraction, with big feet and still bigger suit-case, crowded to the brim with gaudy and useless wares, was driven from the premises instanter. The saturnine villain with parti-colored rugs had to fly for his life. The small boys, who had worn a path through my lawn to the campus, were forced to pass through a neighbor's garden, and the D'Indy Club, the Frauenverein, the Mothers' Club, the committee on church affairs, met elsewhere.

Really, I was quite ready to repeat my experiment should anything happen to my old friend, and stood ready to advocate the cock-turkey as the watch-dog of the household.

One day, as I was passing the brush-heap, I bethought myself of taking a look at the turkey-hen. So I pulled her hissing from her nest, and to my surprise found that the bricks had been pushed from the nest, and in their place were eight eggs. With a thrill at my heart that reminded me of my boyish days of birds'-egging, I replaced her carefully and took heart again.

Perhaps I had made a mistake after all. Perhaps the books were wrong. I remembered to have heard a story once of an Irish common

councilman, who in a somewhat acrimonious debate as to how many gondolas should be bought for the pond in a public park, sturdily advocated the purchase of a male gondola and a female gondola, "an' t' lave th' rist t' nature," as a measure calculated to minimize expense.

Would it not be better to discontinue the artificial methods and "lave th' rist t' nature"? I would try. It could n't be any worse. I could n't lose any more than the whole brood. Could n't I? Wait a bit.

In due time every egg hatched, and the mother turkey cautiously crept out, suspicious of every sound, watchful of every movement. That night they disappeared in a grove back of my lot.

The next morning I arose betimes, or a full hour and a half before betimes, and stole into the silent wood. Joy! at the foot of a huge pine I found her and her tiny babies, safe, sound, and dry, although a smart shower had left everything dripping.

It was a success. She alone had the secret of nature. Away with artificial methods. Return to nature. Strange how besotted man gets in his ignorance. But for blind adherence to experiment, the New Hampshire turkey

> "Might have stood against the world,
> Now none so poor to do him reverence."

Wait a bit: that night at dusk I stole again

into the forest, and to the foot of that mighty pine. She was not there, neither were her chicks.

The mother love, suspicious, primeval, alert, had prompted her to find a new hiding-place. I would pit my wits against hers. Not to interfere with nature, but to keep her in sight, to study her cunning, to learn her secret.

I hunted so long that night that on my return in the darkness I bumped into trees and stubs,—

> "I scratched my hands, and tore my hair,
> But still did not complain."

The next morning at daybreak, and the next night at dusk, and for many, many weary days and nights, I searched, and peered, and sneaked, and spied, and climbed trees, and skinned and barked and abraded myself in various tender places.

> "Donati lived, and long you might have seen
> An old man wandering as in search of something,
> Something he could not find, he knew not what."

In vain my search. I never saw her again, nor did I ever see her chicks, and to this day their disappearance is a mystery.

It seemed to me that the old cock sympathized with my grief. At least he did not seem the same turkey, and he began to follow me around. It may have been that he was considering the advisability of giving me a poke with his iron beak. But if so, he never did.

Time passed. The haying season arrived, waxed, and waned. Green corn, astrachan apples, Sanford's Jamaica Ginger, and allopathic physicians battled for the lives of our dear ones; Colorado beetles cut my potato-tops to the ground, rose-bugs in flying swarms devastated my "jacks." In short, from morning to night the whole household was engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle to rescue our feeble crops from their many enemies. Constant occupation is good for grief and disappointment.

In due time my cheerfulness returned. Old Tom conceived a violent passion for a diminutive bantam hen, and the memory of his erring or unfortunate mate faded.

September came with its early crops, but I had no crops. October with its later harvests, but I gathered none. November merged into December; December into January. Old Tom began with the lengthening days to develop a savage temper. An early February storm had made ponds of our garden, and sharp weather had converted it into a fine rink, where my daughter spent her leisure hours.

Shortly after the noon hour I was in my room, disrobed. I had just finished caring for my stable animals. Suddenly a series of loud screams startled me. I rushed to the window, pulled up the shade, and looked. Penned into a corner cowered

my small daughter, while before her, scarlet of neck, swollen of wattles, with every feather on end, towered old Tom, furious and menacing.

From the side porch the housemaid screamed hysterical advice, and jumped up and down in her excitement.

I grabbed my trousers. They were wrong-side-out, and I got stuck in them, and fell to the floor. Gentle reader, did you ever try to pull on your trousers while the house was burning, and when the salvation of yourself or your loved ones depended upon speed? Try it some time and see how adroit you are. I threw them across the room, got on one shoe, and was groping under the bed for the other, when another cry of terror electrified me, and I dashed for the stairs.

"For heaven's sake, are n't you going to put on some clothes?" screamed my wife; "the girl is out there."

"Damn the girl!" I snapped; "if she can stand there and see that gobbler scare Nath. to death, I guess it won't hurt her to see me." And I shot down the stairs like an Andover quarterback going through a hole in the Exeter line.

> "The uniform 'e wore
> Was nothin' much afore
> An' rather less than 'alf o' that be'ind."

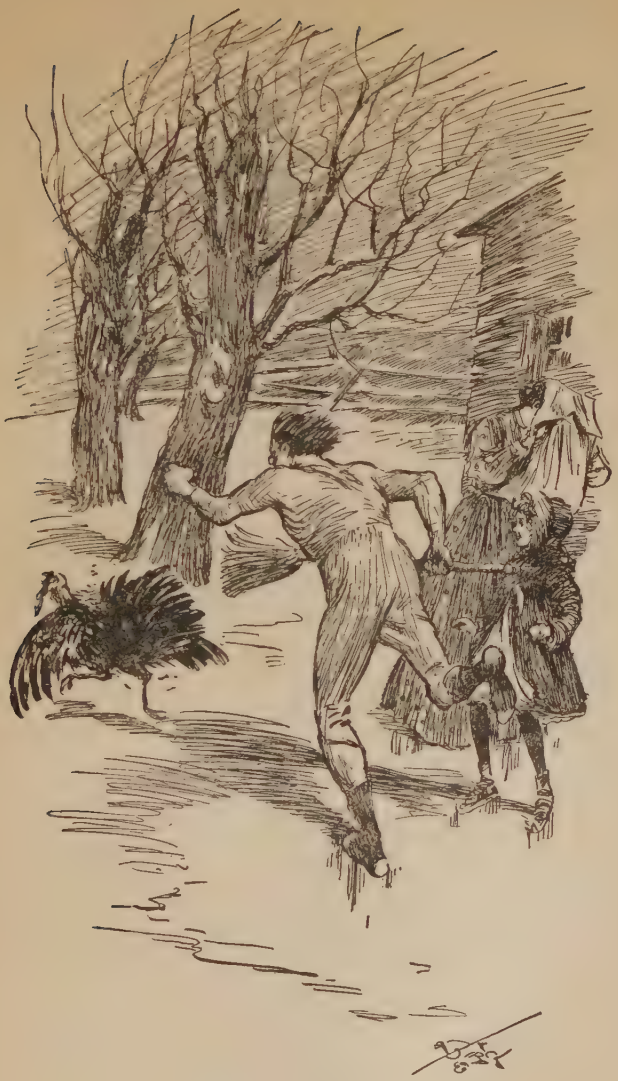
I grasped a broom as I flew through the kitchen,

turned the corner of the shed on one wheel, and dashed into the open with a whoop. At the unexpected appearance of so skinny a spectre clad in pale mauve underwear, stretched to its utmost tension by frantic straddles, the housemaid shrieked and threw her apron over her head, but I kept on. Arrived in time, I swung with all my strength on the gobbler's scarlet neck, but missed, and turning several times with the momentum, fell and rolled on the ice.

I fairly bounced to my feet and dashed after the flying bird. Down the field we went, round the apple trees, the gobbler in the lead, just out of reach. Through the rose-bushes, which tore ravelings from my underwear and cuticle from my straining legs; round by the shed the chase continued, over the wood-pile, which turned and rolled on me, giving the gobbler a fresh start.

But I picked myself up. I did not feel my bruises. Eliza crossing the ice was not more oblivious of her cut and naked feet. I was going to catch that gobbler if I broke something. No red-headed devil bird should menace the life of the child of my old age; and again I picked up my agile heels and flew. This time the wily old bird took me over a hard-frozen corn-field with stubs, but failed to shake me off.

Neighbors threw up the windows and stared. People in passing teams stopped and cheered us



DASHED INTO THE OPEN

on. The bird ran with drooping wings. He was about all in. So was I. Suddenly he stopped and squatted. I tried to stop, but could not, and fell with soul-shaking violence.

When I sat up, the gobbler had crawled into the barn, and with the assistance of my wife and daughter, who draped me in a table-cloth, I returned to my room, regained my breath gradually, and resumed my clothing.

Does any one wish to buy an adult male turkey? Weighs thirty pounds; is a direct descendant of the first turkey seen by the Pilgrim Fathers when they moored their bark on the wild New England shore. It may be the original turkey. I can't say. Turkeys are not in general valuable on account of their antiquity, but a genuine Stradivarius turkey, with Sheraton legs, Hepplewhite upholstery, and Chippendale varnish, of undoubted antiquity and undisputed ancestry, ought to bring a good price. At any rate, the turkey industry on the D. F. Ranch is hereby discontinued.

CHAPTER XIII

A NIGHT CALL

ALL day long the June sun had beaten down with fierce July heat upon the sleepy town, upon the smooth green lawns, the white, pink, and yellow roses at the corners of houses, upon the bright green blades of growing corn in the gardens, the feathery foliage of the carrots, the waxy richness of the beets, the bright and smiling faces of the pansies, the smooth expanse of the nasturtium, with its crimson and yellow flashes from between the green leaves, and the fragile pinkness of the fragrant sweet peas.

Under the revolving sprinklers of the lawns, dapper robins had fluttered with wings upturned to catch the splashing drops, or stood upright with close-furled plumage. In the short white clover, which always follows a sprinkle of wood ashes, hundreds of bees had worked, unmindful of the fierce sun.

As darkness slowly steals over the landscape, the robins, silent during the furnace-heat of the day, begin the clear warble of their evening song.

In the grove behind the house the wood thrush chants his song that speaks of twilight shades in the darkening woods, while down in the dim orchard a whip-poor-will repeats again and again his odd three-syllabled cry, and from far above in the dim blue his prototype, the night hawk, drones his nasal whine, with rapid upbeat of his wings, and now and then plunges downward like a gray bolt, only to check his earthward rush with suddenly outstretched wings, through which the wind roars like distant thunder.

As the darkness deepens, the fireflies twinkle fitfully in the meadows, bats begin their erratic flight, and the droning buzz of the beetle is heard. The stars appear, but there is no moon, and the glare of electrics mar the soft darkness of the night.

The white figures of strolling couples pass to and fro, and the faint conversation of groups of people gathered on the piazzas and enjoying the delicious coolness of the evening, blends with the voices of Nature and night. One by one the lights in the houses disappear, the hum of conversation ceases, and the little town sleeps.

At midnight we are awakened by the insistent ringing of the telephone bell.

"Confound the telephone! Why can't people let it rest nights? There, I guess they have given it up now. No, there it goes again, 1-5, 1-5, 1-5; some one is in trouble."

So finally, with much grumbling, I turn out, and stumble downstairs in the dark to the receiver.

"Hello! Hello!! what is it?"

"Yes?"

"Is it so important as that?"

"I will, of course."

"Let me repeat. Take the north road straight through to the village, first right, four corners, fourth house on right, big barn, about eight miles. All right."

"Hello! Yes, can do it in about an hour. Yes, will bring a witness. Is there one at the house? All right."

Some one is dying; a will must be made at once. It is too late for the little girl. Dick must go. So out to his room I go, dressing hurriedly. Dick grumbles; I don't blame him, for he came in late; but he becomes better-natured as he shakes the sleep from his eyes.

Downstairs we hurry. I run my head against the edge of a door, curse under my breath, fall over a chair, curse again right out loud, finally find and light a lantern. Polly lurches to her feet as I try the hasp of the barn-door. In the six years I have had her I have never seen her down.

I harness her hurriedly. This time I will drive, not ride; I can make better time, and my errand is urgent. Dick comes out with a bag of papers,

which I keep ready for such calls. We hastily don light overcoats, for the night air is cool and damp, and with a lift of the reins we whirl round the corner and plunge into the blackness of the summer night.

Above we can see the stars and the faint light of the Milky Way. On either side the opaque blackness of the forest trees shuts out all light. There has been a shower in the early night, and the earth reeks with dampness and sweet and pungent smells.

From above comes the faint cheep of a passing night-bird. A sudden drone as a night beetle blindly blunders past makes one dodge instinctively. From the wet trees and damp places the trills of the tree-frogs and the peculiarly sleepy cry of the toads, a soft croak with a falling inflection, remind one of returning in a boat from an evening swim on a hot night in July.

The night is full of faint and drowsy noises, vague smells, eerie thoughts. But for the rapid *clop, clop, clop* of Polly's feet, the whirring of the wheels and the creak of the whiffle-tree, which needs oil, we might think ourselves in elfland. We can almost hear "the horns of Elfland faintly blowing." But Polly is practical and knows her business. She is troubled with no fancies. *Clop, clop, clop*, she goes, with her ears pointing forward in the darkness.

A sudden chilly dampness shows we are approaching the river. We can almost see the mist as it settles on our faces. Then we have thunderously passed the bridge and ascended a rise, where it is warmer and where a sudden breeze showers us with big drops. Then down a rocky rattling slope we go, between dense pines. We cannot see them, but the sudden blackness shows they are there, standing shoulder to shoulder, for warmth and shelter in winter, for coolness and shade in summer.

And now we are approaching the village. In a house a light shines out of a watcher's room, a sick-room possibly, but in the darkness it seems cheerful and bright. Let us hope it is a late student, a clergyman writing his sermon for the next Sunday, a reader finishing an absorbing story. So bright a light could not come from a sick-room. Who could be sick on a June night? I forget, for we are going to a sick-room. I pull Polly up for a breathing-space. She has come five miles in about twenty-five minutes.

We are in the village now and can see the faint outlines of houses. A dog rushes out barking savagely, one of those unreasonably fierce shaggy animals that are the pest of drivers, and especially of physicians and night travelers. Polly darts ahead, there is a thump, a yelp, then the off front wheel strikes a soft something and

the wagon heels over dangerously amid a chorus of ear-splitting howls and pattering feet, as the shaggy devil bolts for home. We grin cheerfully, for the dog has learned a lesson.

We pass through the village at a racing gait, and are at the turn in the road where we pull up to get our bearings, — then to the right more slowly. How are we to find the house in the darkness?

It must be here, for a lighted lantern hangs from a post. We drive in, and a man in overalls and rubber boots takes our mare without a word, and motions us toward the door. We enter the sitting-room. In the corner is a melodeon, closed, and covered with a green cloth. On the melodeon is an old violin with all the strings broken but the G. A shaded lamp burns on the centre-table. There is a case of stuffed birds on a small marble-topped table in another corner, and a glass frame of wax flowers on a shelf. On the walls are two black-framed oval portraits, horrible caricatures of deceased persons, the lady in black and white checked dress, low in the neck, and with a large locket or medallion on her breast. Her hair is parted in the middle and brought down over her ears in a quaint old style recently revived. On all sides her ample skirts spread in billows. The man is brave in stock and tight-sleeved, narrow-shouldered black coat, and vo-

luminous gray trouserloons and beautifully polished boots.

On the floor is a bright but somewhat faded carpet and braided rugs. A cat dozes in front of the open fire-place, neatly swept and dusted, while in a corner an old eight-day clock ticks loudly. I sink into a cambric-covered deep rocker and wait.

The clock ticks with dreary monotony, there is the sound of muffled footsteps overhead, then a door opens, and a portly, waistless, middle-aged woman beckons me upstairs.

As I enter a dimly lighted room, as noiselessly as possible, I see stretched on a bed, and covered with a patch-work quilt, an old gray-haired man, with a strong face sunken and yellowed by wasting disease, the lower jaw more prominent than in health, and the gnarled, twisted, calloused hands resting on the white sheet. By his side sits a sweet-faced old lady, with tremulous lips and troubled eyes, patiently awaiting the end. The old man opens his eyes and half raises his hand in welcome. I am in time.

Long before I come from that chamber the first streaks of light appear in the sky, and as I reënter the sitting-room it is nearly dawn. I look at the violin, the G string has snapped. There is a confused murmur and a hurried rush of feet overhead.

We go slowly out to where Polly is waiting and drive quietly out of the gateway. Hear the birds! Robins, bobolinks, catbirds, orioles, purple martins, — a rare bird now, — chewinks, purple finches, ground sparrows, vireos, red-winged blackbirds, bluebirds, pewees, summer yellow-birds, warblers, chippys, wrens, oven-birds, and every other bird that has a voice, are filling the air with trills and warbles, chirps and fluty grace notes. The air is full of the sweet scent of locust blossoms and the woody smell of the pines.

Everything speaks of life and love and happiness, but back in a darkened room the G string has snapped, and a life has gone out for all time.

CHAPTER XIV

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

ABOUT the Fourth of July my vegetable garden was in the most flourishing condition possible. My corn was thick and straight and green, my beets were bushy and the leaves purple and glossy. For weeks I had luxuriated in salad from my lettuce-rows, in radishes, exhumed from my own beds and cut into fancy shapes, and in pie-plant, which unfortunately I had received as courtesies from my neighbors, as my fatal error in treating my own plants as burdocks had prevented me from enjoying my own products.

I had even gone to the extent of pulling a few potato-tops, hoping that their unusual development might have produced new potatoes of available size; but what I found were seemingly covered with warts and blisters, which rendered them extremely unattractive in appearance, and slimy and disagreeable to the touch.

Shortly after the Fourth I engaged a man to mow the grass-crop. He appeared with an assistant, and after viewing the astonishing growth of pigweed and other worthless vegetation, they

hung up their scythes and returned for bush-hooks, with which they swung and hacked all day, and then, having charged on a bush-hooking basis, which is one half larger price than plain mowing, they departed, after assuring me that the crop was of absolutely no value, which, as I had been so informed for about two hundred times, I knew perfectly.

No long rains, no showers, no thunder-storms came to interfere with haymaking, which could scarcely have been the case had the crop been of value. But after I had collected the entire crop in one enormous pile it made a gorgeous bonfire, but left a black smooch on the green surface of my field that did not entirely disappear during the rest of the season.

My strawberry-plants had grown surprisingly, but they demanded more of my time than almost all the other crops together. For although they grew very fast, they appeared to be on terms of intimacy with almost every sort of base weed, whose company they appeared to court, and who in turn were fondly embraced by the tendrils of their aristocratic acquaintances.

Again, these strawberry-plants had the most astonishing fertility in sending out trailers or creepers or shoots, which, if not pruned, would in a very short time have converted the entire farm into an enormous bed of strawberry vines.

I had six rows of these plants, and it was my custom every morning, just after finishing grooming Polly and Lady M. and Jack, to go down on my knees, and with a pair of shears prune one row of trailers before breakfast. Thus the beginning of the next week would find me at the starting-point, with just as many, if not more, trailers to cut and weeds to disentangle and pull up than ever before. However, I persevered with the hope of bountiful berries the second year.

A few days after the Fourth we had a terrific storm of wind and rain which lasted all one night. The next morning, when the sun rose, I was early on hand to see the results of the storm on the garden. Although partially protected by a high board-fence, my corn was badly damaged and a good deal of it prostrate. My other vegetables had suffered less.

I retired to the barn and communed bitterly with myself. "Ingenui, et duplicis tendens ad sidera palmas talia voce retuli: 'O terque quaterque beati quis ante ora patrum Troiæ sub mœnibus altis contigit oppetere!'" Was it for this that I had worked, and slaved, and dug, and hoed, and pruned, and scratched, and raised blood-blisters on my hands? Was it for this that I had spent evening after evening with lantern, wheelbarrow, tub, pail and dipper, faithfully coaching the struggling plants through a dry spell? Was

it for this that I had borne with calm disdain paternal scoff, uxorial jeer, and neighborly gibe?

Then I went back and made an examination. None, or at least very few, of them were broken. I tried the experiment of straightening one plant and heaping earth round it to keep it straight. It was perfectly feasible. For an hour before tea, and after tea until late at night, with lantern I worked until every bent stalk was straightened. It was fully a week after that when Daniel, the omniscient, informed me that the stalks would have straightened out themselves.

A day or two after, my friend Daniel called to see Lady M. and to determine whether or not it would be advisable to grant that blue-blooded animal a long holiday in view of the great event in her life, and, I also felt, in my fortune and reputation as a stock-farmer.

By his advice Lady M. was given a vacation in the paddock, quite a pretentious name for an open shed with a fifty-foot run. It seemed as soon as she was turned into the lot that my expectations were almost realized. I am a little given to building air-castles, and I must confess that I looked forward to the possibility of breeding the two-minute trotter. I realized the extreme improbability of anything of the kind ever happening to me, and yet it was a possibility. Lady M. showed good breeding. There were

strong evidences of the Morgan in her conformation, her courage, and her quiet, gentle ways. And when bred to Electric Jim (2.16¼), first dam Sukey M. (2.21), second dam Wilkes Jane (2.12½), what record would daunt her foal.

It might be — well, I had known men to get into the judges' stand for less reasons than that. I even might sit in the sulky and have a card with a number on it fastened to my sleeve. "Gentleman driver" was by no means a title without honor. Perhaps the many trials and losses I had suffered in my farm and garden investments might in a way be a sort of preparation designed to make me appreciate all the more my success as a horse-breeder, just as a man sometimes eats heartily of salt fish before attending a banquet at which wine is to flow freely.

At all events, should her get not be a racer, the ownership of a finely bred, game roadster, with all that goes to make up a gentleman's driving outfit, would certainly afford me great pleasure, as would the casual mention of Electric Jim (2.16¼), first dam Sukey M. (2.21), second dam Wilkes Jane (2.12½).

True, I had never heard of these famous horses except in the advertisement referred to, but their records were unquestionably genuine, and some day when I had time enough I would look them up, and paste their records in my stud-book,

which I anticipated buying as soon as the foal arrived.

Every day was one of expectation. In the morning I was first at the paddock. At noon I hurried there from the office, and visited there the last thing at night. I arranged for my family to notify me by telephone. My friends and neighbors were nearly as much interested as I was, and waited in more or less anxiety for the event.

For several weeks this went on. I do not know how I could have stood the strain had it not been for the fact that I was kept busy both by office and farm work. The corn silked and became a daily course on our table, and on those of our relatives and neighbors.

My beans likewise helped maintain my reputation as a *bon vivant*, while some of my other crops were maturing in fine shape. It was, however, at the cost of constant labor to keep down weeds. Indeed, I do not believe I could have succeeded had it not been for the occasional assistance of Mike, who would accomplish in a day more than I would in a week.

I forgot to say that during the month of June I had, literally, bushels of roses, which I distributed by the pailful among our friends, the successful cultivation of which (both friends and roses) kept my wife engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter with all manner of creeping,

crawling, climbing, and flying things. This was not a bad thing for me, for it took up so much of her waking hours as to leave me practically free from interference or even criticism in my employment of my time.

About the middle of August I was called away from home to attend a hearing in a farming town about twenty-five miles distant, which could not be reached by rail. Consequently, I had to drive Polly, and as the hearing lasted three days, I was unable to return home at night.

There were several lawyers connected with the case, and a large number of witnesses, several of whom stayed at the hotel where I was staying. In the evenings we would sit out on the hotel piazza and chat with one another and such of the farmers as might drop in.

In this way I got much valuable information in relation to farm matters, which would have saved me much trouble and considerable loss if I had known it before. Everybody was interested in my brood-mare and the expected colt, and I talked horse for hours.

While I was sitting thus the second evening, I was called to the telephone, and responded with alacrity, for I felt that news of the colt's arrival had come. Sure enough, I recognized my daughter's voice.

"Hullo, papa."

"Hullo, little girl."

"Oh, papa, what do you guess? Lady M. has got a colt. This afternoon I went out, and there was a colt in the pen. Ain't you s'prised?"

"Well, well, I'm glad of it, I should say I was surprised."

"Grandpa and Mr. Gilman's man are taking care of it. Oh, it has got the longest legs!"

"What does Daniel say about it?"

"Oh, he said it was the most perfect one he ever saw. He told me to tell you it was the most perfect specimen he ever saw."

"Are you all well?"

"Yes, and we want you to come home just as soon as you can. Oh, papa, I went right up and patted it."

"Well, good-by."

"Good-by."

Every one about the hotel congratulated me, and the next day, after finishing the case, to which I'm afraid I could not give my undivided attention, I started for home directly after lunch, having notified my family that I would be at home at about four o'clock.

My arrival had evidently been not entirely unexpected by persons not connected with my family, for when I drove into the yard I found quite a crowd awaiting me and smiling delightedly at my return. There was my venerable father,

Daniel, and his wife, the Professor and his wife, my own family, and several other neighbors, to greet me and shower congratulations upon me.

It was the first time that a colt of unblemished ancestry had been foaled in that neighborhood, and it was delightful to witness the genuine appreciation of our friends. I really felt as if I were the chosen instrument to lead them to material improvement in the most important branch of farm-life.

And so, escorted by my friends, I walked triumphantly toward the paddock, trying hard not to show too openly the pride and elation I felt, and listening to the heartfelt encomiums of my friends.

"Well," said our friend Daniel enthusiastically, "I have bred horses all my life, and I am bound to say it is one of the most perfect types I have yet seen. And when a colt shows its characteristics so young, you may be sure that they are going to stay with it during life."

I beamed with pride.

"Was there ever a truer saying than 'blood will tell,' Daniel?" asked my venerable father.

"Never, George," replied Daniel. "See how strongly the remarkable qualities of his sire appear in the colt. Why Lady M., good animal that she is, is not in the same class with the colt."

I beamed some more.

"Don't you think," queried the Professor, "that the colt may have inherited some of its remarkable qualities from the first dam of Electric Jim, Sukey M. (2.21)?"

"Or from the second dam, Wilkes Jane (2.12½)?" suggested another neighbor. "We all know that the Wilkes blood is highly thought of among horse-breeders."

As he said this I came to the paddock, and my friends drew apart from me in order to let me feast my eyes on the colt.

I looked and looked again, and leaned my hands on the fence and stared foolishly. For a moment I could scarcely believe my eyes, for there stood Lady M., her great soft eyes full of love, nuzzling, by all the gods, a long-legged, round-barreled, big-headed mule colt, with the most grotesquely enormous ears I had ever seen. Shades of Balaam and Don Quixote! it looked like a jack-rabbit on stilts.

I swallowed hastily, looked for a place to sit down, grinned foolishly, and turned to see my friends in various conditions of convulsions. Daniel was shaking like a huge tumbler of jelly; the Professor was leaning over the fence, holding himself with both hands; my daughter was dancing a grotesque jig; my son was rolling on the ground; while the rest of the assemblage were bending and twisting and cackling like lunatics.

Well, I have faced financial crises with coolness, ridiculous situations with dignity, and reverses with resignation, but I never was so completely "graveled" in my life.

I do not know what the result would have been, — whether I should have brained the shrieking maniacs, or the mule and its fool dam, or fled from the place, — but just then the sight of that mare nursing that infernal jack-rabbit struck my sense of the ridiculous, and I became the loudest and most abandoned of the shrieking crew.

When I had in a measure recovered, I invited all hands to the house, and set out whatever I could find as our first libation to the god of treats.

What that mule cost me since I scarcely dare estimate.

CHAPTER XV

THE TALES OF GRAMP

DANIEL and Gramp, my two nearest neighbors, were as chummy as two old friends could be. Gramp was a good many years older than Daniel, and always claimed that Daniel should have more respect for his age than he had shown. Daniel would retort that father's age was the only thing about him that he did respect. Each one accused the other of cheating him in horse, cow, harness, or wagon trades.

As Daniel knew more about cows and horses than father, he generally had an advantage over the old gentleman in a trade in these staple products; but when it came to harnesses and carriages, especially when real antiquity entered into the matter, Gramp had the grape-vine twist on Daniel. In his early days, before he forsook the brad-awl and the waxed thread for the lucrative sinecure of a custom-house clerkship, Gramp was a harness-maker and a carriage-trimmer. Consequently he knew the ins and outs of the business, and Daniel had to manœuvre very cau-

tiously when he and Gramp were engaged in a transaction involving these articles.

On the other hand, Daniel was a farmer, a gentleman farmer who sold the products of his farm, displaying much ingenuity in obtaining, as Gramp said, the highest market prices for the lowest grade of goods. On one occasion Daniel sold Gramp some baled hay, about three fourths of which, when shaken out with the fork, refused to come down, and floated round in the air in the form of hayseed, chaff, and dust, leaving of each bale about three pecks of tangible fodder.

To avenge this high-handed outrage Gramp traded "as nice a pair of pigs as you ever saw, Daniel," with that rotund gentleman, for a kicking gray mare with a milk-leg and the scratches; and when Daniel came for the pigs he found to his horror they were guinea-pigs, and worth twenty-five cents a pair, rather more, in fact, than what the mare was worth, for she kicked out the entire side of the barn, and cost Gramp about twenty dollars in repairs.

But Daniel and Gramp were great story-tellers, each being gifted with a vivid imagination and a most whimsical manner of expressing himself. Daniel, although a farmer, was a confirmed skeptic in such matters, and was in tastes and feeling a sport. He read the "Sporting Life" religiously, knew every professional baseball

player by name, and every college and inter-scholastic football player by heart.

Gramp, on the other hand, while not knowing the difference, except in taste, between burdock and pie-plant, or between smart-weed and spinach, was an enthusiast in farming. He scoffed loudly at modern sports, and told most astonishing tales about his proficiency in all sports when a young man.

They used to sit under a large elm tree in front of my house, and smoke and tell stories, and they usually had a crowd of eager listeners. Perhaps the following narrative may best express their style of oratory and the strength of their imagination.

It was one day in the fall when Dick with half a dozen student friends had come in great glee from witnessing a game at the Academy Campus, and as usual Gramp had a story ready.

"Gee! Gramp," said Dick, "you ought to see one of these games. Our backs just ripped holes through their line that you could have driven an ox-team through. We beat 'em seventeen to nothing. One collar-bone broken and two ankles wrenched. That's playing, I tell you, Gramp."

"Hm!" said Gramp, removing his pipe and crossing his legs, "I guess you never saw a real game of football, Dick. Say, Daniel, did you

ever hear of the big game in '42 when I played right guard against Andover?"

"I never heard the details of it fully," said Daniel, "but I heard it was a great game, and that there were a good many serious accidents and pretty rough playing. Several men were killed, were they not, George?" queried Daniel.

"Not in that game," replied Gramp; "that was in '39 when Williams, Andover's left tackle, was killed, and Lovejoy, Exeter's right guard, made a touchdown before Williams's body had been carried off the field. This caused a protest by Andover, and as the referee overruled it, Andover broke into the field to rough-house the referee, and of course Exeter had to stand up for him.

"There was a bad time before the fight was stopped, and a good many were killed and wounded on both sides. I was there after the thing was over and saw the dead laid out in rows. That was bad enough, but not nearly as bad as hearing the wounded cry for water and beg the by-standers to put them out of their misery."

Gramp paused, sighed, and smoked reminiscently for a few moments, while the boys stared with astonishment and half smiles of incredulity, which changed to very serious looks as they saw Gramp's look of profound seriousness and Daniel's sober phiz.

"Go on, Gramp," said Dick at last, as Gramp sat staring into vacancy, his mind evidently intent on visions of the past; "tell us about the game of '42, when you played."

"Oh yes, Dick, where was I?" said Gramp. "I know now, it was about the game of '39. Well, naturally this created a good deal of feeling between the schools, and the games were stopped for a year or so. Then the doctors of the town, aided by the druggists, the dealers in artificial limbs, glass eyes, and false teeth, the dentists, and the undertakers, all signed a petition to the faculty of both schools to allow the game to be played as usual, stipulating that they would use their influence with the students to have a more open game played.

"The undertakers rather objected to this, as they got their profit out of the fatalities, but finally it was brought about that the game of '42 was played on the campus in front of the Exeter school.

"Well, as I was saying, Dickie," continued Gramp, "that game with Andover beat everything so far. People came from all over the country. They crowded the windows and housetops. Andover had her strongest eleven on the field. There were some very peculiar looking men in the Andover line, who attracted much attention by their enormous muscular development. We

did not know until some time after the game that Andover had hired Yankee Sullivan, John C. Heenan, and Awful Gardner, famous prize-fighters, and had given them easy courses in theology to keep them in school. They had tried to work in Molyneux, the nigger who went to England to fight Jackson, and they put pipe-clay on him; but it cracked and fell off the first five minutes of play, and the Southerners of both sides drew the color-line.

"We had some outside assistance, too, for we did n't intend to be behind in good works. So we had introduced to the membership of the Junior Class the three strongest men in town, all blacksmiths, — Jim Ellison, Charles Lane, and Adoniram J. Towle. True enough, they had n't been in the Academy long enough to get much of a mastery of Latin or Greek, and intended to return to their anvils as soon as the game was over.

"I was playing right guard against Yankee Sullivan, and in the first line-up I got one in the jaw that nearly floored me. I knew then what was up, and the next time the ball was put in play I dodged his left and put in a counter of my own, and there was a hole in the Andover line through which our right half-back made a run of forty-five yards to a touchdown right between the posts. After the goal was kicked and we went

back to pick up Yankee Sullivan, we found that the subs had picked him up and put him in the ambulance."

"Was he killed, Gramp?" asked Dick.

"No, not quite. I understand he partly recovered, but never was any good in the ring again, and was lynched in California some years after.

"In the next ten minutes' play, Andover made a touchdown through Jim Ellison, our centre, who could n't stand up to Heenan. Jim was strong and gritty, but could n't box. So after a conference between the coach and captain, I was put in as centre. I saw Heenan's face fall when he found me opposite him, and I knew I had him licked. He was a tough customer, and in the next rush bored in on my slats as I swung on his jaw; we then clinched, and I back-heeled him, and our left half-back made twenty yards through the hole before he was downed.

"The next rush Heenan rather bested me, I must confess, as he butted me in the stomach, and Awful Gardner, having thrown Charles Lane, secured the ball and came through centre for a run of one hundred and eighty-seven yards."

"Gee! Gramp," interrupted Dick, "how far was it between goals?"

"Two hundred yards," replied Gramp. "You see, we had got within ten feet of their goal-line, and when Awful was downed he was on our three-

yard line. The question then was whether we would hold them for downs. Well, on the next line-up Heenan tried a tremendous upper cut, which I dodged, and the force of his blow turned him a complete back summerset, and while he was in the air I dove underneath him, got the ball from their quarter-back before he could pass it to the backs, and when the crowd overtook me I was lying between the Andover goal-posts with the ball safely over the line.

"When the goal was kicked and the sides separated, Heenan was found still turning summersets like an animated pin-wheel, not having been able to stop, and time was called until he could be stopped and recover from his giddiness.

"This, of course, caused a good deal of cheering for me, and gave us a decided lead over Andover. So far nobody had been killed, and only a few crippled for life, and the first half closed with Exeter leading Andover by the score of twelve to nothing.

"In the fifteen minutes' rest between halves, the Mayor and Common Council waited on me in Dr. Soule's parlor, and informed me that the Board of Trade and the Faculty and the Deacon of the United Churches were going to give me a banquet at the Squamscott after the game, provided we won and prevented Andover from scoring.

"You can imagine this made me feel good, and I determined to do my utmost to win by a big score. But when we lined up for the second half, I found that Lane had given place to a new man, and that Towle, although still playing at left guard, was about all in. This really put me opposite two men, Awful Gardner and Heenan, a pretty bad place for a young fellow of nineteen against two of the best heavy-weight prize-fighters the world had ever seen.

"To add to this, all the plays were directed through me. So you see, Dickie, I was in for a warm afternoon. And a warm one it was for a fact. Every time the ball was put in play, Awful would fell Towle to the earth, and then he and Heenan would swing for my jaw and lead for my wind with heavy rights and lefts, while I could only get in one blow to their two. I noticed, however, that I kept them from getting through, and after a half dozen line-ups I found they were weakening.

"I then put in play a dodge that Andover could n't block and had no way of meeting. I whispered to the quarter to keep back far enough to give me a free swing and be ready with the ball. Then, when play was called, I waited until Heenan or Awful made the first rush for me, then seized the first one, dashed him against the other, rushed back, grabbed the ball and started

through the hole I had made, generally making from thirty to forty yards.

"Neither Heenan nor Awful could stop that play, and before the game was called I had made sixteen unaided touchdowns, from which twelve goals were kicked, which left the score with what we had made in the first half, 104 to 0.

"That evening we had a banquet at the Squamscott. I was the only one of the eleven, and the only one who took part in the game besides the referee and the time-keeper, who could appear at table. We had a fine spread and good speeches were made. Dr. Soule made an address in Latin and I made a brief response in the same language, and we all sang a Latin ode composed by the pastor of the church in the Academy yard, and which ended with, —

'Ad Hades cum Andoveria!'

three times, and the school yell. I had a copy of it somewhere but I suppose it was lost.

"Well, that was all very flattering and nice, especially when they all filed by my chair to shake hands and the faculty said,

'Macte, puer, virtute';

but what I valued most was when I was called into Heenan's and Awful Gardner's rooms, where they lay swathed in bandages and smelling

of iodoform, witch-hazel and New England rum. I sat on the edge of the bed, and they both said they had fought the best men in England and America and had never run up against any one who could hold a candle to me. They wanted to train me for the ring to beat the best man in England, but I told them I was thinking of studying for the ministry, and I could n't give that up.

"That's all, Dickie, my boy; but when you hear people talking of the modern game of football and a few dinky collar-bones broken, just tell them of the way we played in '42 and '43, when men were killed and crippled for life, won't you?"

"Gee!" said Dick, "that was a game."

"Gee!" chimed in the students, "I guess we must be going"; and they stole off on tiptoe, while Gramp winked at Daniel and filled his pipe afresh.

On another occasion Gramp had been holding forth to a select crowd on a favorite hobby of his. Gramp always maintained that if he had a few acres of land and one thousand hens he could readily make at least one thousand dollars per year, or an average of one dollar per biddy. With care of an extraordinary nature fifteen hundred dollars would be not unreasonable.

Various opinions were advanced, and finally

Daniel's opinion was asked; and in reply he improvised the following sonata.

"Now, gentlemen," said Daniel, with his attractive smile, "I will admit that my friend George knows more about old harnesses and pre-colonial buggies than any man in our vicinity; but as for hens, he knows absolutely nothing. Now I have studied into the matter, experimented a good deal, and have been the wiser by experience. I never raised a hen that did n't cost me three dollars, and which would have sold under the most favorable conditions for seventy-five cents. I never got a dozen of eggs from my hens that did n't stand me forty-eight cents when the market price was twenty-two, and a dollar and seventy-five when the market was forty-eight. I never ate one of my chickens at a less price than sixty cents a pound when Boston quotations were twenty-four."

"Nonsense, Daniel," interrupted Gramp with a sniff, "you did n't know how to go about it."

"I tell you, George," said Daniel, raising his voice, "I know what I am talking about. What do you suppose your son's experience is?"

"What? him!" said Gramp in disgust. "Why, if he drank a glass of cistern water, it would cost him ten cents."

"Well," said Daniel, "I guess he is no worse than the rest of us, but let me give you my ex-

perience. You say a hen ought to average a dollar a year profit. That is all right provided it did n't cost anything to keep a hen during that time. But the profit must be figured on the cost, and the question is, what does it cost to keep a hen a year? Is n't that so, boys?"

"That's all right, Daniel," chimed in the boys.

"Well," rejoined Daniel, "what does it cost to keep a hen a year? Frankly, I don't know, for I never limited operations to one hen. If, as my wife has frequently told me, I had been contented with one hen, and had kept her in a hen-proof enclosure where she could n't by any possibility get out and ruin flower-beds, and defile the front steps, and make the face of nature a howling, cackling wilderness from morning to night, then perhaps I would have known where I stood, and most assuredly would have known where she stood in the matter.

"Nor can I estimate in mere dollars and cents the actual expense of keeping many hens, for there are some things whose value cannot be reduced to legal tender. So to average the thing I will estimate my hen-holdings at twenty-five birds. First, I bought the twenty-five fowl, paying therefor fancy prices for very common hens. I am glad that I cannot remember what they cost me. Next, I fed them generously for a year, and that cost I cannot estimate, thank Heaven! My

time, of no particular value, I also eliminate from the estimate.

"What else did they cost?

"First, the love and affection of my wife; and really an unprejudiced person could not fail to be immensely impressed with the size and variety of her repertoire on the hen question.

"Second, the lining of several coats, caused by carelessly putting new laid eggs into my pockets and forgetting them until I sat down on them.

"Third, the regard of kind neighbors, whose flower and vegetable-gardens have been ruined by some other person's hens masquerading as mine.

"Fourth, the necessity of repainting at great expense a democrat wagon and a concord, which had, without my knowledge or consent, served as roosts during the winter for several vagrant biddies which eschewed the comforts of the hen-house.

"Fifth, public disgrace of the entire family in serving to distinguished guests breakfast bacon and addled and explosive eggs, taken by mistake from under a setter.

"Sixth, a permanent scar on my face, received in taking a setter off her nest.

"Seventh, my arm in a sling for ten days as a result of separating two fighting cocks, and receiving a prodigious thump and a deep spur-

wound in my left hand, from one of the combatants which was in the act of making a pass at his opponent at the exact moment I interfered.

"Eighth, re-sodding my own lawn and those of several neighbors.

"Ninth, loss of sleep from early crowing and consequent mental disturbance and melancholia.

"Tenth, my reputation as a worthy citizen merged in the unsavory character of a sport.

"Eleventh, have become wind-broken from being called upon at any time of the day to join the family in a desperate race about the neighborhood, to head off and corral squawking pullets.

"Twelfth, have offered two dollar and a half cups to local poultry shows which have been duly advertised as fifteen dollar cups, to my lasting infamy and disgrace.

"Thirteenth, have contracted the roup, the pip, and chicken-pox from similarly affected poultry.

"Fourteenth, stepped on a hen in the dark at the top of the stairs in the barn, and descended like a mountain avalanche or a snowslide from a tin roof, accompanied by a tin pail of corn-meal, a lantern, and a torrent of imprecations on hens in particular and everything else in general, generous distribution of eggs and corn-meal, total eclipse of lantern, and severe fracture of tin pail.

"Fifteenth, protracted lameness caused by last-mentioned rapid transit.

"Sixteenth, shot at predatory cat with chicken in mouth. Missed cat, but killed mother hen and eight small chicks, broke two panes of glass, and scared an hysterical neighbor into spasms.

"Figure this out for yourself, strike a balance if you can, and then decide 'What profiteth it a man if he gain the whole world,' but lose every shred of his reputation as a man and a brother, a citizen and a neighbor, a husband and a father.

"Well," said Daniel, rising slowly and ponderously, as a sporty-looking individual, driving a rakish-looking chestnut with boots, drove into his yard, "it looks like a horse trade"; and with one accord the assembly adjourned to see Daniel do up the sporty stranger.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SHOWER

A BLAZE of sunlight, a yellow gleam of dusty road, a brown expanse of parched and dying lawns, of drooping leaves, a dry filing of crickets in the hayfields, and a bank of purple-black clouds rising rapidly in the west.

Beneath the currant bushes, now crimson with fruit, the fowls with drooping wings and with wide-opened mouths, pant with the heat. Not a bird-song is heard; only a faint and distant cooing from the pigeon-loft makes the stillness more marked. All nature seems prostrated by the heat of early afternoon. In the distance the faint rattle of the mowing machines sounds hot and dry.

On the main business street the sun blazes with an oven-like heat. Under the shade of the withered elms and faded maples stand the store horses, with drooping heads, stamping impatiently at the flies. An occasional heavy cart rumbles by, the driver lolling with throat bare and shirt sleeves rolled to his shoulders. The street is dry, dusty, panting and lifeless.

Suddenly a faint and prolonged roll of thunder is heard, dying away gradually. Then the silence is profound, for every cricket has ceased its filing. Then a quick flash, so indistinct that it is well-nigh invisible and seems but a quick vibration of the atmosphere.

A long wait, and again a profound rumble punctuated with deep and resounding thumps, like a cannon ball rolled down the attic-stairs, slowly dies away; yet the sun blazes fiercely and the leaves of the trees hang pulseless, the birds are silent, and the air dense and motionless.

Again a flash, and this time a vivid one, and after a shorter interval a thunderous roll of musketry. Suddenly it grows dark, a greenish, glimmering, purplish light, then a brilliant jagged flash tears across the blackness, followed by a wrenching, rattling peal of thunder, but not a drop of rain falls.

Then with a roar and a cloud of dust the wind is upon us. The trees bend and writhe and lash the air like giant snakes. There is a blinding, vivid flash, a rattling roar of thunder, and then the rain comes. First, in huge spats that splash in the dust with large irregular blotches; then a driving torrent that fills the gutters to raging streams, makes foaming sprays of the conductors, and lays the grass as flat as if a scythe had passed over it.

The darkness has increased until the sudden flashes of lightning seem doubly blinding, the rain comes down in slanting arrows, with a rushing, hissing roar that almost drowns the thunder. The sewer-holes are swirling whirlpools choked with leaves, twigs, and litter of every sort.

And now a deluge of humanity, caught in the rain which has come so suddenly, passes through the square and seeks shelter from the downpour in every direction. It is interesting to note the different types. It is possible to study human nature and anatomy, and to blend instruction and amusement in this view from our office-windows.

Here comes a fat woman, with puffy ankles bulging from flat, soft shiny shoes with an elastic V-shaped gore in the sides. She wears whity-gray stockings of generous size, and toes in. She is evidently a person of some determination, as she elbows her way to the shelter of the nearest awning. She is rosy, well-dressed, and evidently prosperous, but I am glad I'm not a fat woman with bulging ankles in whity-gray stockings.

Three barefooted boys come next, laughing, tussling, pushing, and playing tricks on one another. The rain splashes on their bare heads and drenches them, but they seek no shelter, but shout, laugh, and splash through the swirling torrents, like ducks.

Then comes a thin-legged, gaunt man with loose trousers, too short, and frock-coat, too long. Why should a thin-legged, gaunt man wear loose trousers and why, of all things, a frock-coat? The water drips from his hat-brim as he strides powerfully for shelter. The wind blows his wet trousers against his shanks, disclosing the extreme attenuation of his figure, astonishing to the beholder.

Look! here comes a ponderous individual carrying an umbrella. He walks easily, his chest protrudes, he appears conscious, perhaps a trifle over-conscious, of his vast superiority to climatic conditions. He would not run from a shower, not he. The rain pours and the procession of passers-by scurry in every direction. Ordinary everyday people may grow excited over such trivial matters as a wetting, but he has cultivated the true spirit of dignity and repose. He takes things as they come, and rises superior to his surroundings.

See, as he passes the Town Hall a gust of wind from the north strikes him. His umbrella drives sou'-sou'-east. He clings to it with desperation. A fatal mistake, for it goes inside-out like a boy doing a handspring. His imitation panama follows; his hair, growing from the sides and carefully brought up and pasted over his cranium to hide his baldness, is blown from its moorings and

HE CLINGS TO IT WITH DESPERATION

flutters fringe-like from a dome like a shiny new-laid egg.

From a calm, peaceful, well-balanced philosopher, he becomes a raging, gibbering maniac. He rushes after the fleeing hat and bounding umbrella. Can he overtake them? The wind is a sixty-mile-an-hour gale, in gusts. He cannot do better than twenty. Away he goes and is soon out of sight. None too soon, however, for although the picture is exhilarating, his language is calculated to chill the blood, and his wild, furious gestures, his frenzied, rolling eyes, are disquieting to the sensitive.

As he disappears, a supple, slight, graceful young lady comes tripping along. Here is something worth while. Dorothy Dodds in tan and tan hose. She holds her dress a trifle high, but I can forgive a good deal in that line. See! she comes to a deep puddle. Well! really! that was a little — never mind, it was necessary, and she did it very gracefully, and I would not have missed it for anything.

She is followed by a well-groomed young man who is so interested in the contemplation of her many charms that he walks off the sidewalk into about a foot of muddy water. Serves him right, too!

Now comes an old scrub-woman with faded brown shawl closely wrapped about her bent

shoulders, a little black hat dingy with age and depressed over one eye, and rubbers through the holes of which the water squshes as she plods along. Rain or shine, it is all one to her provided she gets work enough and it is warm enough. She has long ceased to care for such things. And yet she once was a fun-loving, laughing, trim-built young girl. But that must have been long years ago. Poor old thing!

The rain still falls. The streets and square are deserted. The thunder rolls at intervals, but the shower is passing. A gleam of sunshine strikes through a rift in the clouds and turns the falling drops to gold. From without comes the sweet homely song of the chipping sparrow.

CHAPTER XVII

MILKING

HAVE bought a cow. For many years I have looked, longed for, and languished after a cow, have studied the cow markets, have always attended auctions where cows were likely to be sold under the hammer, have made it a point to be present on the square Friday afternoons in the fall season, to see the droves, and have never sufficiently admired the shrewd and professional way in which huge and unwieldy men in slouch hats, blue frocks and leather boots, and carrying whips, will enumerate the good points of a particular animal to a prospective purchaser.

Indeed, it was always my ambition and my sincere determination, not only to own a cow, but on some bright day in October, when the frosts are sharp of a morning, the sunshine warm at noon, and the air cool and bracing towards evening, to make the trip from Gilmanton to Brighton with those same jolly, fat, and cattle-flavored men, whom I so much admired. How many times have I anticipated the pleasant

evenings in the country taverns on the route, the long rides through the country roads piled high with red and yellow leaves, the chaffering and bargaining in the village squares, the meeting of strange droves and the locking of horns of rival leaders, the shouts of the drovers, the wild dashes after escaping cattle, the thousand and one bits of experience and information that one would glean, and the pleasant acquaintances one would make!

Alas! those days have passed, and with them the jolly giants of the road; the "Drover rides on his raids no more," and the only thing left is memory. No, I have forgotten, my cow is left, for I truly believe my cow is one of the first animals driven over the road in the old days. For she is old, my friends, a veritable antique, a sort of colonial sideboard of a cow, with curved, spindly legs, and knobs and peaks to hang things on, and hollows to hold things, and handles to take hold of.

The abandoned villain and former friend who sold me this cow assured me that this was a cow as was a cow, an easy milker, kind, eats next to nothing, cheapest cow to keep he ever saw, nearly fills a pail to the brim every milking, — so she does, a quart pail, — and all for thirty-five dollars.

Now I had inquired and found that a good cow ought to bring seventy-five dollars, and here was (at least according to my friend's description) a

rather remarkable animal offered for thirty-five. It was too good a chance to lose, and I embraced the opportunity and made the purchase. If I had embraced the cow instead, I should have found out what a bony old hat-rack she was. But as she was in a close stall in a dark barn, I did not take the opportunity of examining my purchase with the care one should observe in making important deals.

I only knew that she had soulful eyes, a trusting manner, and smelled like a freshly fertilized lawn on a hot evening when the "Current Events Club" is dining with your wife.

As the place of the transaction was about ten miles from my residence, I sent a husky German with a cow-rack to bring her home. It seemed somewhat like sending a carriage for an invalid, but I was anxious to get her home and see if she could fill that ten-quart pail I had purchased the night before.

The German started before light Sunday morning, and at about noontime, when happy children in white were returning from church accompanied by their mothers and grandmothers, and smug gentlemen in frock-coats and white neckties, and bearing hymn books and "Day Springs" under their arms, were coming home from divine worship, and the air was full of the sweet incense of the Sabbath, Ludwig drove through Front

Street, perched on the rack, and smoking a long meerschaum. Inside the rack was a light russet-colored animal, evidently made of barrel-staves. Had the animal not been inside the rack, it would have been difficult if not impossible to distinguish the cow from the rack.

He drove into the yard, and without speaking unloaded the animal, received his pay, and started to leave. Just before he got out of the yard, he stopped and said, "Mist' Shute, dat cow he die pret' soon. He pretty old cow."

I dragged her into a stall, fed her with corn-stalks, hay, carrots, middlings, gluten, cotton-seed meal, shorts, sweet apples, and potato parings, until she was distended like a balloon, and waited expectantly for milking time.

Hours dragged slowly, but still the cow ate on. I made a hurried calculation on the back of a shingle, and found I had given her eighty-three cents' worth of food, and the supply in front of her was fast running short. But five o'clock came before she bellowed for a new supply, and I grasped my bright new pail, turned up a bucket for a milking-stool, took off my outer garments, my collar, cuffs, and necktie, hung them on various projections of her anatomy, sat down and began to milk. The first squeeze I made sent a hissing snowy stream into one shoe. The next connected with the palm of my hand and fizzled

a fine spray all over me. The third did not materialize, because she side-stepped away from me so suddenly that she broke my grip and I found myself on all fours with my head in the milk-pail. I arose and apostrophized her profanely, then sat down and resumed practice. This time I hit the pail twice before she swung around in my direction and landed me, heels up. I arose, smote her several thumps with the bucket, and invented an entirely new cuss-word to suit the occasion.

Then I began, again taking the precaution to sit as far from her rear elevation as possible. This time she kicked me. It is astonishing how far forward a cow can reach with her hind foot. I retaliated with a drop kick in her stomach, which sounded like a bass-drum. She made another pass at me with her hind foot, but I saw it coming, dodged, and punted her to the forty-five yard line again, where she was held for downs. This closed the first round with honors even.

The next round commenced with both combatants feinting and dodging all over the ring. I secured a strangle hold on her, and extracted about a wine-glass full before she felled me to earth and trod over my prostrate person. I was not hurt, through that special providence that watches over fools and drunken men, and it is well known that I am a temperate man.

After I had put my knee in the pail and pulled and bent it into shape, I gave her a quart or more gluten to take up her attention, and fell to again. This time I succeeded better, and before she had eaten the gluten I had nearly covered the bottom of the pail with foaming milk, interspersed with hayseed, dandruff and sawdust. Having finished her gluten, she looked around, appeared surprised at my determination, and put her foot in the pail; I called time, emptied the pail for expectant fowl, which, by the way, have formed the habit of gathering around me during the milking hour, or hour and a half, wiped the pail out with my handkerchief, and took a fresh hold. This time I retired as far forward as her shoulder, reached a couple of yards backward, and, in spite of her kicking, she could not locate me.

Thus did my anatomical peculiarities, coupled with science, prevail over brute strength. I smiled grimly from my point of vantage, and squeezed and pulled manfully, while that wretched cow stood with her back humped and her belly drawn up, holding back with all her bovine might.

You have all heard how the crocodile lies in wait until his prey gets within reach of its powerful tail, when with a circular sweep it is thrown into the cavernous jaws. This cow suddenly reversed the programme, for she violently swung

her head round, caught me in the rear with her knobby horns, butted me within reach of her hind leg, kicked me back, butted me again, and I escaped only by abjectly crawling out of the stall.

I threw up the sponge. It was a clean knock-out. I could not have gone back into the ring if the referee had counted one hundred. But I felt that if that cow was not milked that night, there was danger of an explosion before morning, so I called in a neighbour of ripe experience, who, to my great horror, took a seat on the off side of the animal.

"Look out," I yelled, "don't get on that side, she will kill you."

"What are you talking about?" he inquired, with astonishment, "have you been milking on the right side?"

"Yes," I replied, "of course I have."

"Why, you plumb idiot, it was a wonder she didn't kill you," he replied.

"She has," I assured him.

Since that time my intimacy with that cow has ripened into true friendship. We get along charmingly. Like Bill Nye's cow, she gives milk frequently. She has phenomenal digestive powers and eats continuously. What becomes of her food is a question to baffle a government expert. She has not gained an ounce of flesh. Theoretically, she ought to give about forty quarts per day.

Practically, she reluctantly yields about three pints, of which one pint is distributed more or less impartially over my clothes, the cow, and the surroundings.

My milk costs me approximately twenty-six and one-half cents a quart.

Is there any one who wants to buy a cow that is a cow, an easy milker, kind, eats next to nothing, cheapest cow to keep you ever saw, nearly fills a pail to the brim at every milking? She is a blue-blooded animal with a pedigree. I haven't the pedigree, but I know she is blue-blooded, because she gives blue-edged milk.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CALF — ANOTHER FOOTRACE

EXPERIENCED farmers have all united in an opinion that a cow should go dry at least six weeks before the calf comes. This serves a double purpose. The cow gets a rest and a chance to recuperate from the strain of giving a pint of milk in a ten-quart pail twice a day, and the merry farmer has six weeks to get the cramps out of his hands, caused by trying to get the cow to part with that pint of milk, and the stain out of his soul, caused by his lying about the amount.

In this way much good is done to the old line-back and to the old moss-back, and both are benefited to a very great degree. The cow grows fat on good food and inaction, but the farmer grows thinner, if possible, because one source of income, to-wit the milk, is cut off.

However, as I was assured that this was the proper thing, I was determined to carry it out at all hazards. I didn't just know how to go to work. If the cow had been addicted to smoking, I could have made her smoke rattan, which, as every

boy knows, dries up the blood, and, of course, could have no other effect upon the milk.

This being out of the question, I then thought of giving her doses of alum. You see, when I was a boy and had a canker in my mouth, which was always explained to me by my mother as being the direct result of saying bad words, and which for many good reasons I could not deny, a little alum rubbed on the affected part puckered up my lips so that they looked like the stem end of a green tomato, and made my mouth so dry that I couldn't spit through my teeth, another accomplishment of mine, for a week. But how I could whistle!

Naturally, this occurred to me as a facile means of drying up the old cow, but before putting it in operation I consulted the fountainhead of all bucolic knowledge, Daniel, my rosy and jocose neigbor.

"How much milk does she give?" queried Daniel, in answer to my request for instructions.

"About a pint and a half," I replied.

"Dry! How much drier do you expect to get her?" exclaimed Daniel with some heat. "If I had a cow that didn't give but a pint at a milking, I should think she was pretty almighty dry. You don't want to endanger your premises by getting her so dry that you can't take a lantern into the barn, do you?"

"Well, no," I replied doubtfully, "but I want her dry."

"Don't milk her to-morrow," said Daniel.

So the next morning I omitted to milk her, and before noon my wife was in tears, three small children in the neighborhood had convulsions, and five complaints were entered to the proper authorities that I was maintaining a nuisance in keeping a bellowing cow.

So at noon I milked her and got a quart. Then I went to Daniel again.

"Don't feed her," said Daniel.

So that noon I didn't fill the manger, but tied her under an open shed. Before night, several old ladies in the neighborhood were taken with nervous prostration, and I was served with a *quo warranto*, a *mandamus*, a *ne exeat regno*, a notice of a hearing on a petition for an injunction, a libel for divorce, and arrested on a warrant on a complaint charging me with conspiracy to make a tumult in the compact part of the village.

As the last-mentioned instrument was returnable before my own court, I did not worry about it, but hastily fed the querulous and bellowing animal, and returned to my office where I drew up as an answer to the other actions: "Necessarium est quod non potest aliter se habere." This calmed my mind somewhat. I had at least got some cases on the docket to defend.

I then returned to Daniel.

"Damn the cow!" said Daniel.

"That don't amount to anything," I replied, "I have done that for months."

"Kill her then," he retorted, and washed his hands of the affair.

This was perhaps the best advice he had given, but I couldn't bring myself to do violence to so old and tried a chum. We had had too many wildly exciting times together. She was rough, but I always could depend on her to do the best she could and give me a square tussle.

In due time the calf came and was pronounced a beauty. He — much to my regret it was a he — did not seem exactly handsome or shapely. On the contrary, he seemed a sprawling heap of awkward, bony, wobbly legs.

Indeed, he spent the best part of the first day in awkward attempts to rise, and prodigious successes in the way of heavy crumpled-up tumbles. But in a few days, Moses! how that calf could run, kick and butt.

We naturally had a little reception for it. You see, a calf is a new thing to us and we were proud of it, — her, — him, I mean. So one day as I was exhibiting it, — him — to several neighbors, he reached forward, caught hold of a button on my vest, just over the pit of my stomach, and mouthed it in the most cunning manner. I held

my breath so as not to scare it, and the ladies were in ecstasies. I did not hold my breath long, however, for suddenly the animal, with the natural intent to increase the flow of milk, gave me a terrific bunt with its nose, in which all the weight of its body and all the convulsive power of its suddenly stiffened legs were expended.

All the breath in my body was expelled with such violence that I only regained it after a paroxysm of hoarse gasps and startling hawks, which antics and involuntary inch-wormings, I am sorry to say, entertained my callers far more than the antics of the calf.

When the calf was three weeks old, it had developed speed of a race-horse quality and frequently dragged me about the premises with unparalleled swiftness, and at the end of a stout rope. This was good exercise for both of us, and kept down the increasing flesh of overmaturity.

One day, as I was coming from the office, I saw the calf coming down the street from my premises at a wild gallop, flinging up his heels and dragging a long rope. I was not quick enough to head him off, but with rare presence of mind jumped with both feet on the rope as the animal shot by me like a flash of lightning. When I lit I was nearly a rod from the starting-place and on my head and shoulders. People who saw me

in the air said I looked like a pinwheel, so rapid were my revolutions.

I was mad! Thoroughly mad! Fighting mad! I would catch that devilish calf if I burst something; and I took up the running.

Scientists say that the wild ass of the desert is the swiftest of all animals. Be it so; but without desiring to institute any comparisons, I must acknowledge that a certain tame one developed the most astonishing burst of speed on Pine and Front Streets on that day that ever drew the attention of the sporting world.

Round the corner of Pine and Front we went, I on one wheel and the calf heeling dangerously to leeward and with its keel half out of water.

Righting ourselves, we flew along like International Cup winners. In front of the Seminary entrance, by terrific sprinting, I had nearly closed the gap between us. From the Seminary entrance to Tan Lane the calf drew away from me, as my spark-plug fell out or my carbureter failed to carburet.

At the lower part of the Academy yard I was almost within reach of my opponent's rudder, but failed to grasp it. Suddenly he tacked abruptly into Elm Street, while I skidded to Conner's fence and ripped off a tire, but kept on with frantic gasping jumps. Just in front of the Unitarian Church I had made up my lost space, when the

calf suddenly stopped and we came together like two football tackles, amid a cloud of dust. I had run down my prize.

As I slowly returned up Front Street, breathless but triumphant, I received many laughing congratulations over my fleetness and determination. Just as I was about to reënter my yard, I heard Daniel from his piazza across the way shout, "Say, old man, no end obliged to you for bringing back my calf. Saved me lots of trouble. Let the man hitch him in my barn, please."

Sure enough, a glance showed my calf lying quietly under a tree, safely tethered to a crowbar, while I had chased his infernal calf over two miles at race-horse speed. In a sort of daze I handed the grinning man the rope, looked at my torn and dusty clothes, my shoe with the sole gone and my ruined hat.

"Curse your calf!" I hissed, and limped painfully into my house.

CHAPTER XIX

AMATEUR THEATRICALS

BELIEVE that a country town or neighborhood can receive no greater benefit than in the introduction of new blood. My brief experience as a farmer has taught me this, and my long experience as a citizen of a country town has convinced me that in no way can a country community make good its loss of young men who have an ambition awakened in schools and colleges to go to larger communities, than by offering every possible inducement for young men and women to come in from other communities.

For instance, if Ike Peterson's son Bill goes to Boston or New York or Seattle or Chicago, and becomes an active and influential member of the law firm of Strasser, Ellis & Co., our town has lost one who might have been a useful citizen. But if at about the time of Bill's departure, the junior member of the selfsame firm should, curiously enough, decide to quit the city for life on the farm, or amid semi-rural surroundings, and, more curiously still, should decide to be-

come a free lance in the same community that Bill has quit, why then we "break even," to use a sporting phrase, at least so far as number goes; but in reality we are better off, for we get a citizen with advanced ideas, imbued with the hustling spirit of city life, which cannot fail to have an influence for good on the small community. To be sure, New York or Seattle or Chicago or Boston has Bill, which we hope is a good thing for them and for Bill. But the effect of Bill's invasion is not immediate or in any way disturbing to the urban community.

But if, instead of the junior partner of the firm, the young and zealous assistant pastor of one of the churches of Seattle or Chicago or Boston or New York becomes pastor of the local Congregational or Baptist or Unitarian or Episcopal Church, why then we go Chicago or Boston or New York or Seattle "one better," as the moral status of the community is jacked up much more effectively than that of Boston or New York or Seattle or Chicago is on account of Bill's arrival.

By this means only is the professional, social, financial, and moral balance preserved.

Now we have had accessions to our neighborhood. I disclaim modestly any responsibility for the fact, for the new neighbors would undoubtedly have come had we not lived there.

In fact, one of the neighbors came in spite of my repeated warnings, showing how little he cared for my opinion.

It was in this way: one day a sturdy, stocky, auburn-haired (I am better acquainted with him now and call it red) young fellow came into my office, and wished to see me for a moment.

I knew he was in no trouble, for he was too fresh and bright-looking. I knew by his well-bred, respectful manner that he was no book agent or seller of patented articles.

So I willingly dropped whatever I had on hand, and invited him to the inner office. He showed his directness by coming at once to the point.

"I am a doctor and wish to settle in your town. Is there a chance for me?"

"Mighty little, I'm afraid; there are Doctors Blank, Dash, and Hyphen, and Brackett, and Comma, and Colon, allopaths, Doctors Capital and Lowercase, homœopaths, two college veterinarians, half a dozen amateurs practising in violation of law, and several old ladies without waistlines who are popularly supposed to know more than all the doctors in a certain class of cases."

"Gee!" replied the young man, "it don't look very promising, does it?"

"Not unless you are a good doctor and have money enough to wait," I replied.

"Well," he said slowly, "I think I am a good

doctor. At least I have been through a good deal of preparation. But as for money, I have enough to fit up a house and office, and wait perhaps six months. How many of these doctors own automobiles?"

"Three," I answered, "and the rest have horses."

"Hm," he said, "that looks better. If they can all afford horses, I ought to be able to get along by walking or using a three-year-old bike."

"Well," I said, "you might. But I think you had better try some other place. By the way, come to lunch with me and I will talk it over with you."

"Thank you, no," he answered. "I am going to look the town over and see what I can of it before taking my train to Boston." And after offering a fee, which I declined, he thanked me and withdrew.

I had nearly forgotten him when one day he returned, bringing with him a very attractive young lady whom he introduced. Although they were well-bred and consequently not in the least demonstrative, it was at once evident that they had more than a passing interest in each other.

As before, he came to the point with his usual directness. "Well, Mr. Shute, I have considered the matter of settling, and I have decided to come to Exeter."

"Bully," I replied in the expressive slang of the period. "I think you are making a mistake, but I like your grit and I am glad you are coming; for Exeter, like all country places, needs new blood and new ideas. Now what are you going to do about quarters?"

"That 's just what I want to see you about," he said.

"And it is the most important thing of all!"

And I rapidly gave him the names of several places I thought he might get, among them an attractive little house not far from mine.

The next day I found he had engaged that place, and a few days later he began to move in his furniture; but I saw nothing more of the young lady for a while.

The other addition to the neighborhood came rather suddenly, for one day in the early fall, on returning to the office, I saw in front of a neighboring house an immense van of household goods, an excited father, a helpless mother of a large family, a colored servant and six or seven children, watching with devouring interest two brawny policemen who were forcibly removing two very drunken draymen from the vicinity with prodigious exertion, in which catch-as-catch-can, Græco-Roman, collar-and-elbow, hitch-and-trip, "side holts," grapevine twists, hammer-locks, cross-counters, straight lefts, jabs, upper-cuts,

pivots, and other technical manœuvres of the ring and mat alternated with one another in bewildering rapidity, and a quality of language was being handed round that would chill the blood of a pirate.

Now two men, however big, strong and willing, cannot readily, and without assistance, subdue, handcuff, and abduct two other men equally big, and, further, inspired by a mixture of wood-alcohol, fusel oil and other powerful stimulants, known as curry-comb whiskey, even when the two first-named gentlemen are clothed in the majesty of the law, blue coats, brass buttons, and helmets that rest mainly on their spreading ears.

And so, as a law-abiding citizen and a magistrate, it was my duty to go to the assistance of my officers and to deliver them from their enemies, which I did, without much enthusiasm, however; and with the assistance of a lusty peasant who came by in a farm-wagon, and the excited father of the family, we soon had the miscreants safely trussed and piled into the farm-wagon, which was pressed into service with the horse and the driver.

This accomplished, and the prisoners having disappeared townwards amid a prodigious rattling of loose wagon-wheels and terrific blasphemy of the chained, I turned my attention to my new neighbors. They were in a very un-

pleasant predicament. Their entire household goods were in the van, including such supplies as were necessary for immediate use. Luckily it was warm weather, and their night's lodging depended upon their strength and ability to disentangle and reconstruct their household furniture, and night was coming on apace.

There was but one thing to do, — to march them all over to my house, there to take pot-luck with us.

I was a little more confident than usual in relation to pot-luck, for that morning I had sent home a particularly fine and large roast, and green corn and vegetables were abundant in my garden, and milk and eggs were always at hand.

My wife and my children, who had arrived in time to see the closing rally when we "flopped," as Dick expressed it, the draymen, somewhat to his disgust, as he came just too late to take an active part in the struggle, added their eloquence, and we finally persuaded the entire family to accept our hospitality, and after a hearty supper, we set to work on their goods.

How easy it is to work for other people when you are doing it out of neighborly good-feeling! How ingenuity is awakened that you thought you never possessed! Beds were put together that in the annual spring-cleaning would have defied us. Stovepipes were fitted that under ordinary

circumstances would have made a tinsmith become a gibbering maniac. Stoves were lifted and pushed into place that would have made Hercules' labors seem like basket-ball.

By nine o'clock the beds were up, the carpets in place, but not tacked, the range drawing like a furnace, the yet unbroken crockery arranged on the shelves, pictures hung, and, what was best of all, we had become in those few short hours better acquainted with each and every member of the family than we would have been had they lived there for years; and their opinion of our town, which had been steadily going down from the moment they left their old home, had mounted to a really undeserved height.

Indeed, when at a late hour we dragged our tired legs upstairs to bed, we felt that we had really done something worth while, and realized how thoroughly we would have appreciated a little attention of the sort when we entered an alien neighborhood.

The next morning the entire family of children were over in time to see me milk the cow and rub down the horses, and as they had never seen anything of the kind before, I was compelled to answer about a thousand questions before they fully understood matters.

Up to this time the neighborhood had been emphatically not a neighborhood of children,

but rather a neighborhood of dignified elders, and the addition of a half dozen of irrepressibles did much to enliven things. To be sure their advent was regarded by the neighborhood with mixed feelings, in which distrust was a predominating ingredient; but the neighborhood had successfully weathered our invasion, and as some of the most conservative said, "We have seen worse things, and have lived."

All this time the young doctor had been painting and papering his little cottage, impaling himself on tacks and wire nails, abrading his shins against sharp corners, raking, mowing and sodding his lawn, and getting himself into very serious complications indeed with paint and glue and oil and wax and adhesive paste, and lawn mowers that would n't mow and hammers the heads of which flew off and broke the chandeliers, and rakes which he stepped on and which flew up and hit him grievous blows on the brows, and faucets which he forgot to shut off and which leaked all over the front-room ceiling, which fell down on his head, and shut-offs that squirted ice-cold water up his sleeve and down his neck, and flat baskets of crockery and china over which he fell with terrific crashes and unexpurgated oratory, and which he subsequently tried ineffectually to piece together with cementine and fish glue, and finally buried in the back yard.

I admired and pitied the doctor and loaned him everything I could think of in the way of tools and supplies and cheerful comment and disinterested advice, and physical assistance in the way of personal services of myself, my wife and children, my horses and my cow and the stranger within my gate.

I also introduced him to every one I could, and spoke of him as an eminent practitioner, and did every thing I could to advance his interests, without of course sacrificing my own.

But the doctor, while working like a cart-horse in the dusty present, was living in the future. What if his hands were blistered and grimy, his hat dusty and dented, his trousers, once immaculately creased, worn to transparency at the knees, his lungs clogged with dust, his throat hoarse with powdered plaster, cellar-damp and the raucous hissing out of anathemas on various things, he was happy, because he was working for some one.

His preparations advanced toward the goal of completion, and the doctor announced a vacation for a week, after which he would bring the attractive young lady to visit her new home before the wedding-day arrived. Upon this we promptly asked him to bring her to our house, but found that our neighbor Daniel had stolen a march on us. We contented ourselves with find-

ing out from the doctor the exact day of her visit, and began to lay plans to make her introduction to her new neighbors memorable.

So I called a meeting of the neighborhood at my house for a certain evening, and to make it more interesting provided refreshments which included strong coffee, as the affair was weighty and of great importance. The two delightful old ladies arrived, escorted by their servant, who delivered them into my charge with a good deal of formality, during which I bowed over their mitted hands until I felt my backbone creak and then gave them my arm up the steps, while they smiled and turned out their toes gracefully as they minced up the path.

The two old gentlemen arrived with somewhat rusty but perfectly proper black coats of a variety of basket-cloth popular in the early seventies, double-breasted and with narrow shoulders, and they bowed with fine old-fashioned courtesy to the ladies, and sat upright in the stiffest-backed chairs they could find. Daniel rolled in with a jolly joke which delighted the old ladies, with whom he was a prime favorite.

After the company had gathered, the nature of the business was disclosed and a great variety of suggestions was offered. Daniel suggested the purchase of a small, handsome and safe horse and phaeton; the generosity of which proposal

filled us with admiration, while its probable expense appalled us, and his proposal was rejected with few dissenting voices, among which Daniel's was the loudest.

The Professor opined that a handsome dinner-set would always be appreciated. The neighbors all agreed to this, but as prevailing opinion appeared to be in favor of doing something original, the proposal was voted down, with apologies to the Professor. The two old ladies thought an old-fashioned sideboard or highboy would be a good thing. We all concurred in this with great enthusiasm, but as nobody present was willing to sacrifice his antique furniture, and as the entire crowd were in a state of deep financial depression, the idea was abandoned.

Cut glass was beyond our means, silverware out of date, if not ditto, tin and wooden more suitable to our station in life, and so we decided on tin, wood, leather, zinc, and brass.

How to give them? was the next question. This caused great discussion, in which all members took an active part.

One of the old-fashioned gentlemen, however, made a tremendous hit with his speech. Drawing himself up to his full height and placing one hand on his hip and flourishing his pince-nez with the other he thus addressed us: —

"Fellow citizens,—ah, friends and neighbors,

the felicitous — ah, nature of the coming event, which casts, not shadows — ah, but radiant arrows from Cupid's bow," (great enthusiasm and applause), "is the r-r-r-rgmm, little touch of nature that maketh the whole world kin — ah, (applause) the hope — ah, of posterity — ah, inherent in the breast of man — ah, (deep blushes mantled the cheeks of the old maiden ladies) make it incumbent upon us — ah, (violent tugs at his coat-tail by the other old gentleman) to celebrate this happy — ah, event in a somewhat unusual — ah, way. I beg leave to move that some happy — ah, representation, such as a play, be written by some — ah, talented member of our body-corporate — ah, and be produced at some — ah, favorable time, when all could take part." (Terrific enthusiasm; prolonged and violent applause.)

A play, that was just what we wanted. We would have it a bucolic play, because we were a neighborhood of farmers, by avocation at least, and she was from the city, and should learn to take us as we were.

We almost forgot our refreshments, so interested were we in planning details, appointing committees, assigning parts in advance, without in the least knowing what the play was to be. Finally, after prodigious discussion, and huge consumption of fruit-punch, coffee and sandwiches, we decided to purchase a quantity of

kitchen-ware of wood, iron, and tin, and I was ordered, under terrific penalties, to produce a play deftly woven round these homely articles, having for its scene some rural forum such as the country store, the post office, the town-'us or the school-'us.

The evening came, the neighbors arrived. There was the hurried moving of stage props, a terrific hammering behind the curtain, calls for hammers, nails, and laths, entreaties to "get off my head!" sarcastic reminders to "kindly step off my fingers"; queries as to "where are you going with my step-ladder?" and "who had the rouge last?" mingled with occasional and fearful crashes as hurrying people with stage furniture collided, and a general alarm when the curtain suddenly blazed up from a careless candle.

In front of the curtain chairs were being arranged in convergent rows. Rocking-chairs, leather-backed chairs, lounging chairs, dining-room chairs, kitchen, old derelicts from the attic, splint-seated from the store room, and every kind and nature of hassock and footstool. People were arriving and greeting one another in shouts, the noise behind the curtain being such as to render communication in the ordinary tone of voice impossible. Finally, the uproar ceased and the hoarse tones of the stage-manager subdued to a husky but perfectly audible whisper were heard

to order every one off the stage but the stage people, for the curtain was "goin' up in about three seconds."

There was a scurrying and giggling, a heavy fall and a burst of half-stifled laughter, and then the curtain rose very jerkily and disclosed: —

SCENE: *A Country Store.*

[*Counter, hams, rubber-boots, wooden pails hanging from the ceiling, advertisements tacked to the walls, stenciled adv., etc., steel traps, sign,*

W. I. Goods and Groceries

TIMOTHY G. SEED

[*Within,* MR. SEED, *in linen duster, brimless straw hat, leather boots with trousers tucked into the legs, chin-whiskers and rich brown wig, is busy chasing the cheese back into the cage.*

Mr. Seed. — Dang this 'ere pesky cheese, 's allus gittin' aout a' skally hootin' raoun' rite afore customers. Seems so the old scratch was in the cussid stuff. (*Thumps cheese with pork-barrel stick.*) Thar, dum ye, guess naow ye air stunted, ye'll lay quiet a while. Ezry! Ezry! whar is that dumbed worthless boy, Ezry!

[*Enter* EZRA: *boy, jumper, shortish overalls, one suspender fastened with a nail, boots turned over at the heel, chewing and swallowing something.*

Thar ye go, allus eatin' suthin'. Been at them dried apples agen? 'Fi ketch ye eatin' any more dried apples, I'll skin ye alive. It's a wonder they don't swell up 'n' bust ye. Hev ye sanded the sugar, Ezry?

Ezra. — Yessir.

Seed. — Hev ye watered the milk?

Ezra. — Yessir.

Seed. — Hev ye counted over the coffee?

Ezra. — Yessir.

Seed. — Hev ye aired the salt fish?

Ezra. — Yessir.

Seed. — Hev ye giv the butter a good combin'?

Ezra. — Yessir.

Seed. — All rite, then; I want ye to go daun to Ruta J. Bagas and tell him we draw the line on eggs that have been set on fer nineteen days. When eggs peep so's everybody can hear 'em it spiles the sale, 'n' we hev to use 'em to hum. Stop at old Miss Grandiflora's 'n' tell her we got some o' that cookin' butter that 's a little spiled, but good enough for a church sociable.

[*Exit* Ezra, *whistling; Mr. Seed goes to desk and begins to charge up items.*

Seed. — Pumpkin J. Radish, two pounds butter. That butter 's a little spiled, but Pump 's used snuff so long that he hain't got no taste 'n' can't tell the difference, so Pump gits charged full price. Hardy P. Shrubb, half peck o' potatoes, half pound o' cheese. Lessee, wuz it the jumpy kind, or the deef 'n' dumb kind. Oh, yes, I remember Hardy, he sez it got away from him on the way hum 'n' got away into the bushes. I forgot to stunt it afore he tuk it away.

[*Enter* Temperance S. Rhubarb. *Angular female, with Paisley shawl, specs, mitts and beaded reticule.*

Seed. — Howdy, Miss Rhubarb: nice day. What kin

I dew for ye to-day? Got some nice bombazine jest in. Right from East Rochester; think ye 'd like it.

Temp. — No, thank you, Mr. Seed, I 'm on a very different arrent to-day. (*Giggles girlishly.*) I want to buy a weddin' present.

Seed. — Ye don't say so. Ye beant goin' ter git married, be ye, Miss Temperance?

Temp. (*bridling*). — Well, I'm sure I don't know why not if I wanted to.

Seed (*hurriedly*). — No reason 't all, Miss Temperance, ye might hev hed all the young fellers here if ye 'd wanted 'em.

Temp. — Ye know I hed my bereavement. (*Wipes eyes.*)

Seed. — Yes. (*Sighs heavily.*)

Temp. — Now what ye got cheap in wooden goods?

Seed. — Got a nice choppin' block off that big ellum tree.

Temp. — Well; the idea — choppin' block! Guess he 's thinkin' 'baout suthin' besides choppin' wood.

Seed. — That 's what he 'll be doin' for the rist of his born days. Sometimes it 's a mighty 'scape-valve for the feelin's when company 's raoun 'n' ye don't take it aout in cussin'.

Temp. — Well, I guess these two won't ever feel that way. They are just tew little love-birds. It 's beautiful to see them. (*Clasps hands ecstatically.*)

Seed. — Shaw, they 'll fight sure. Love-birds is the crossest critters I ever see. They screech and fight like tarnation cats. I had tew onct. Set on the roost with their heads close together. Well, they screeched, 'n' fit, till one killed 'n' et t'other.

Temp. — Well, this couple is different. So lovin' and trustin'!

Seed. — What yer say tu spoons. Seems thet's what they be.

Temp. — Just the things. Two lovely wooden spoons. Show me the best and cheapest. (*Opens reticule.*)

Seed (*diving into corner, finds spoons with difficulty, dusts them, blows on them, and wipes them on his trousers*). —There, ye kin hit an awful lick with one of them. When them tew love-birds gits inter a scrap it's a good thing to hev suthin' handy.

Temp. (*scornfully*). — I would n't be sinnatin' sich things. Ennyway, I'll take these two.

Seed (*sarcastically*). — One'll be cheaper, and them love-birds kin eat outer one, (*aside*) for a while.

Temp. — Thanks. Five cents. (*Pays, perks, and departs.*)

Seed (*peering from window, soliloquizing*). —Well, here comes old Hen Peck'n' his wife, drivin'. Well, Hen he was a love-bird onct. Don't look like it naou. 'Member how tarnal soft they wuz; et from the same plate at sociables, 'n' drinked from the same glass at picnics, 'n' naou old Mis' Peck won't let poor old Hen set to the table, 'xcept when they is company.

Hen Peck (*entering*). — Howdy, Tim.

Seed. — Howdy, Hen. Pretty good day for the time of the year. What yer goin' to buy to-day?

Hen. — Nothin' much. Want some kind of a weddin' present. Suthin' cheap.

Seed. — Won't Mis' Peck come in?

Hen. — No, she's bad with the rheumatiz.

Seed. — What kind of a present do ye want?

Hen. — Wall, rat pizen er Paris green's the best thing for both on 'em.

Seed. — Shaw, don't talk so, Hen. 'Member you'n' M'randy wuz love-birds onct. 'Member haou ye used to drink from the same glass 'n' eat from the same —

Hen. — Shet up, Tim! I swanny, wuz I sech a dummed fool ez that? Look at me naou Do I look like a love-bird?

Seed. — Not much, Hen. Wall, what kind of a present d' ye want?

Hen. — Suthin' cheap. Wooden ware, M'randy said.

Seed. — How 'd a rollin'-pin do?

Hen. — Jist the thing. Ye can hit a almighty tunk with it. Sometimes seems 's if I could knock M'randy's head off'n her. But she allus gits it first.

Voice from without. — Henry Peck, be ye goin 't' get that present or beent ye? I don't want to haf tu speak t' ye twict.

Hen. — Yes, my dear, comin'. For the land sake, don't be so tarnal slow, Tim. Ten cents; don't wrap it up. Comin', M'randy, comin', my dear. (*Exit hurriedly.*)

Seed. — Poor Hen! M'randy was a likely critter, too. She kind of took a shine to me 'fore Hen begun to set up with her. Sometimes, I almost think she was kind of disappinted in Hen. Naou 'f it 'ad been me, M'randy 'd — Hellow! There goes that pesky cheese agen. Hi tha! shoo! (*Jumps up and chases the cheese back to its cage and strikes it with butt end of butter knife.*) Well, I 've got to put some chloride of lime on that salt fish. (*Sprinkles fish.*)

[*Enter* Pansie J. Pink *and* August Sweeting.

Seed. — Well, Pansie, you look ez pretty ez a Baldwin apple. Ain't thet so, August?

August. — You bet, Tim. I 'm goin' t' buy suthin' for a friend of mine who is goin' to be married, 'n' I jest bet

Pans 'll git suthin' good. I got two dollars 'n eighty cents, 'n' I don't keer fer no expense nor nothin'.

Pansie (*very modestly*). — How much are bread-boards?

August. — Bread-boards nothin', Pans; git 'em some napkin-rings or a pipe, or pen-wiper, er suthin' useful.

Pansie.—I want them to keep what I give them, and use it too, and I don't know anything more useful than a good bread-board. I'll buy a bread-board and you can buy whatever you want. How much is this bread-board, Mr. Seed?

Seed. — Twenty-five cents, Pansie, and it 'll wear. Sound 'n' solid, just like you, Pansie. Hope I 'll hear about your gettin' married soon, Pansie.

Pansie (*with a* 14-*carat, three-ply, home-made blush*). — Oh, thank you, Mr. Seed, I guess you need n't fear that of me. (*Pays and exit.*)

Seed. — Whot 's the matter with you young fellers, August, lettin' that gal escape? Where 's yer eyes?

August. — Dumpy, not my style. A feller likes a girl with a little go, a little style. One ye know that can trot in quick time. Naou thet bread-board shows just what she is. Fancy a girl with any go to her giving a bread-board for a weddin' present. Naou, I don't 'ntend to spare no expense, but I want suthin' stylish. Naou, a feller likes a good pipe. A good briarwood. That one 'll do. Twenty cents? All right. Kinder high for a briarwood, but I never consider expense when I buy weddin' presents. Naou the picter. Naou that's style, that's finish, thet there picter means suthin'. (*Handles with the appreciation of a connoisseur the most frightful print imaginable. Buys print.*) There, bread-board be hanged; I like some style to a present. When I get ready to settle down it 'll be with some one

with some style, but a fellow must have his little fling first, and there 's nothin' like being up to date. (*Goes out whistling* "Shoo Fly," *stops and bows profoundly as Mrs. Grandiflora enters.*) There, that's what I call style. (*Aside.*)

Mrs. Grandiflora (*in hat of terrific size, flamboyant with feathers, and ribbons in three different shades of red; yellow parasol, and lorgnette made of eye-glasses lashed to tip of bamboo fishing-rod; purple dress, if possible*). — Well, good afternoon, Mr. Seed.

Seed (*coming from behind the counter, dusts chair, places it with profound bow*). — Good afternoon, Mrs. Grandiflora.

Mrs. G. (*seats herself, raises lorgnette to her eyes*). — Have you heard of the new engagement?

Seed. — There beant another, be they? 'Cause 'f there be, I 'm goin' to lay in a new stock of wooden ware.

Mrs. G. — No, no new one, but such sweet things as they are, and so well suited to each other. You know Pope says,

> "Man is the ragged loafing pine,
> Woman the gentle jimson vine,
> Whose scalping tendrils round him twine."

But he 's real smart, and she 's just like a jimson vine, just clasping him every chance she can get. Ain't Pope just too sweet for anything? I do enjoy Pope and Bridewell and McAuley. McAuley is just divine, and it was so strange that he should become a prize-fighter afterwards. But, then, literary people are queer just like musicians. There was Sullivan, you know, the prize-fighter, who wrote the most beautiful song about some poor organ-player sitting playing his organ one night, and someone came along and

HAVE YOU READ "THE SIMPLE LIFE" BY WAGNER?

stole a whole load of wood. He had just bought a cord of it, and, poor man, he lost it all and he hunted but never could find it. But poor man, he never lost hope and stuck to it to the last that he would see that cord again. I hope he did, poor man. But about this wedding, — I do want to buy something real simple. I do like simple things. There are some people who want showy clothes and who love to make a show, but I say, give me quiet tastes and literary ability and I don't want nothin' else. When you see flash people drivin' by in their stylish coops and butlers on the front seats, I say to myself, "Volumina Grandiflora, don't you never fret yourself one bit; ain't it better to be able to talk grammary and to be allitery than to make a show?" No, say I, you can have your butlers and your rubber-wheeled carriages and your tigers, if you want 'em, though I never happened to see any tigers, although I looked for them time and time again, and never see anything more 'n some of them spotted damnation dogs. P'raps them is what they meant. Have you read the "Simple Life" by Wagner? You know Wagner, of course, the man who wrote Mendelssohn's Wedding March. I thought I would read it and it would give me some idea of what is the latest thing to do at weddings. Well, about that present,— a good broom, one of those quiet shiny ones with a red label. Send it up, please. (*Rises and departs, while* SEED, *with his hand to his head, staggers to his desk and begins charging up various articles to John L. Sullivan and Wagner Dryden.*)

[*Enter* MISS MULLI GRUBBE *and* OLD LADY SNAPDRAGON. *Black shawls tightly wrapped across their chests — red noses — black lace-mitts with fingers gone — small black straw hats or bonnets — very erect.*

Mr. Seed. — Good arternoon, ladies.

The ladies (*forbiddingly*). — Day, sir.

Seed (*affably but somewhat apprehensively*). — What can I show you to-day?

Old Lady Snapdragon (*who is deaf, to Miss Grubbe*). — What did the old fool say?

Miss Mulli Grubbe.— He wants to know what he can show us.

Old Lady Snapdragon. — Tell him if we want anything we will tell him.

Seed (*aside*). — I'll show 'em the door for two cents.

Miss Grubbe. — What's that?

Seed. — Nothin', madam, talking to myself.

Miss Grubbe. — They dew say people do that ez they grow old.

Seed (*aside*). — She ought to know.

Miss Grubbe. — What's that?

Old Lady Snapdragon. — What does he say?

Seed (*bellowing*). — Nothin', madam.

Old Lady Snapdragon. — That's whot he's been doin' all his life, talkin' 'n sayin' nothin', but's the first time I ever knowed him t' acknowledge it.

Miss Grubbe. — What's the price of ironin' boards?

Seed. — Fifteen cents if you want 'em to lay people out on, because you can return 'em. Fifty cents if you want 'em to iron on, 'cause we don't take 'em back.

Old Lady Snapdragon. — What 's he say?

Miss Grubbe.—Fifteen cents for corpses and fifty cents for live people.

Seed (*aside*).—If you want 'em for the old lady and will use 'em, I give ye one.

Miss Grubbe. — Give me a new fifty-cent one.

Old Lady Snapdragon. — Can't yer let us have a corpse one that has been returned two or three times, for twenty cents? They'd never know the difference.

Seed (*bellowing*). — No, madam; the last one was returned from a man who had bronical bronchitis, and that 's ketchin' as thunder.

(*Pay grumpily and exeunt.*)

[*Enter* HUNGARIA N. GRASS, *her husband*, OAT GRASS, *local Justice of the Peace, and* JOHNNY JUMP UP, *son of* HUNGARIA, *a little red-headed boy.*

Johnny. — O Ma, want stick er candy. Can I have it, can I, Ma? an' some juju paste; can I, Ma? You said I could.

[*Pulls down barrel of brooms, which in turn brings down tin boiler, lamp and other things.* HUNGARIA *picks up* JOHNNY, *boxes his ears soundly, and hands him over to* OAT GRASS, *who larrups him with his cane. Whereupon* HUNGARIA *relents, pushes* OAT GRASS *into an open barrel, where he sticks. She clasps* JOHNNY *to her bosom and pats his head.* SEED *pulls* OAT GRASS *from the barrel with difficulty just as* POPPY GRASS, *their daughter, enters.*

Poppy (*short dress, bead necklace, hair in two pig-tails, chewing gum and talking as she chews*). — Say, Ma, I want some candy, too. Johnny got some, can't I, Ma?

[*General discussion between members of the family before the matter is finally adjusted by giving her what she wants. While the children are quieted,* HUNGARIA *asks the price of a chopping-tray.*]

Oat Grass. — Jest the thing, Hungaria, most convenient things I ever saw. We kin chop up mince-meat, 's neat 's

you please, and then mix up a mess of chicken-feed in it, and sometime mighty convenient when we can't find the dust-pan. Tell yer, Timothy, Hungaria is a master-hand to make things go a long distance. Don't know what we ain't used that er choppin'-tray for.

Hungaria (*who has vainly tried to stop him*). 'T is no such thing, Oat Grass, and you know it. They ain't a neater housekeeper round, than I be.

[POPPY *tries to dispossess* JOHNNY *of his stick of candy, and the result is a mixup and the children are torn apart by their parents, shaken and set down hard on opposite sides of the store, where they make up faces at their parents and each other.*

Hungaria. — Be you goin' to the weddin', Mr. Seed? We be. It's jest too nice for anything to see young people get married. I only hope they'll be as happy ez we be. We've lived together for seventeen years 'thout never havin' a cross word and if I dew say it, nobody ever had tew such angel children as ours.

[*Terrific crash heard as* POPPY *pushes Johnny's chair backward and general mixup results. After this is quelled, chopping tray is bought, paid for, and parents depart, much to* TIMOTHY'S *relief.*

Timothy (*soliloquizing*). — Well, if that's their idea of happiness, believe I'd rather be an old bach.

Curtain.

The play was very successful, the parts being acted in a perfectly killing manner.

The older of the two old gentlemen took the part of Seed, and a professional could not have surpassed him. One of the old ladies was Tem-

perance Rhubarb, and her smiles, smirks, giggles, Paisley shawl, and tiny jointed-parasol, nearly killed the audience, as did the stunning get-up of Daniel's wife as Mrs. Grandiflora.

The Professor's wife as old Lady Snapdragon, and the new neighbor's wife as Miss Mulli Grubbe, caused us to hold our sides, while Daniel, the Professor, and the other old gentlemen, sitting on cracker-barrels and discussing rural affairs, kept the actors in giggles all the evening.

After the play Daniel and his wife, according to agreement, secured the doctor and the young lady, who were their guests for the evening, bade us good-night and departed homewards, amid our loud protests and entreaties to remain. Then the surprise of the evening was worked. From the attic, days before, I had resurrected a long-disused but able-bodied tuba, had oiled its rusty valves and had practised hoarse harmony until my lips were swollen to sponges. With Dick on an astonishingly shrill E-flat clarinet, one of the old gentlemen on a fife, the new neighbor on a trombone, on which, by the way, he was a one-time expert, the Professor on a bass-drum, my daughter on the snare, and the other old gentleman as drum-major, we at once headed a procession down the street, followed by all the guests bearing their purchases. We countermarched, and, playing

the Wedding March from Lohengrin, *fortissimo* and at double time, marched into Daniel's house and down the broad hall, where, to the great confusion and amazement of the doctor and the young lady, we presented the entire lot of ware, in sections, and with oratory, to the young couple. They recovered promptly from their embarrassment, and it was a late hour when we left Daniel's weary with well-doing and sated with good cheer.

When an entire neighborhood winds up an evening with old fashioned square and contra-dances, with pigeon-wings, Kensington balances and waist-swings; when a gentleman of three hundred pounds' weight goes down the centre with a maiden lady of seventy-eight, like a lithe youth of eighteen with a young matron of twenty-eight, and when two aged but courtly bachelors give an exhibition of ante-bellum dancing that would astonish a modern Papanti, one can readily conclude that performers and spectators are keyed to the highest pitch of enjoyment.

Indeed, the play and the dance were so enjoyable that the evening was but a precursor of many other evenings of similar enjoyment; and before the week was past a meeting was held at the old gentleman's house and an association formed known as the "Masque Club," in which plays are recited periodically, with the book and with

no further preparation than one reading; and the talent that had lain dormant for many years in that neighborhood has been awakened to life, and wields a vast influence in the welfare and enjoyment of the local populace.

CHAPTER XX

PARTING WITH POLLY

HAVE sold Polly, Polly, my only and favorite saddle-mare; Polly, my quick-stepping, nervy, nervous-driving mare; Polly, who would take the bit between her teeth and pull double the moment my leg crossed the saddle, and yet would trot as gently and quietly as an ambling palfrey with my small daughter astride; Polly, who would occasionally come home with fence-posts or the foundations of buildings hitched to her neck, and who on one occasion dove bodily through the barn-door when in one of her hasty returns she found the portal closed; Polly, who ran three miles with me one day when I lost my temper and struck her with the whip. I have sold her, and I feel like a penurious old malefactor.

It was Daniel who got me into the scrape. Daniel has a theory, which he expounds to every one, that a farmer ought to sell his products when there is a market for them and when they are ripe. "For instance," says Daniel, "it's a mighty dangerous thing to hold staple, but per-

ishable articles for a rise in price. Take apples and potatoes. Why, in nine cases out of ten the farmer who holds his apples and potatoes over the cold months for a high price, and gets $2.70 for apples as against $1.80 per bbl., or one dollar for potatoes as against seventy cents per bushel, finds, when he has picked out and thrown away the rotten and punky ones that he has n't a quarter part left.

"It 's so in live-stock. Never keep a cow a day beyond her prime even if she has n't fallen off a bit, but is milking full. Never keep a hen the second season if you wish for eggs. And above all never keep a horse beyond the age of twelve, or perhaps it would be better never to keep a horse more than three or four years, whatever the age."

"But, Daniel," I said, "it takes a year or two to get thoroughly accustomed to a horse, and to get the horse thoroughly accustomed to you. And after you have had a horse three or four years, it is at its best as far as you are concerned, and if it is a good horse you just feel as if you could n't drive any other horse."

"Just the point, boy, just the point," replied Daniel, removing his cigar and flicking a long cone of ash from its tip with his little finger. "When a man gets feeling that he can't drive any other horse, it is about time for him to try."

"Well," I replied, "it seems to me that there

ought to be room for some little sentiment in the matter."

"Sentiment!" sniffed that hard, cynical, bitter man of the world; "the longer I live the less I believe in sentiment where business is concerned. When a man is so beset with sentiment that he can't sell a horse or cow or dog or hen without feeling that he has outraged affection and sentiment, he had better retire from business and keep a hospital for broken-down pets."

Now, even while this stony-hearted neighbor was giving expression to such dreadful beliefs, I sat looking across the street towards his spacious and sunny yard. By the side of the stable dozed an old white horse, so aged that no true veterinarian could guess within a decade of its age. A horse that was a veritable heirloom in the family, and which I vaguely remembered forty years ago to have been a blue roan. Daniel himself had learned, as a very small boy in roundabouts, to ride and drive him. Daniel's father, long dead, may have done the same. Daniel's two boys fifteen years ago discarded him as too slow for their infant ideas, since which time he had been an honorable pensioner on Daniel, and a very expensive one, too; for every time he did not eat his porridge, a veterinarian from a neighboring city was sent for and ordered to spare no expense in making Old Tom comfortable.

A hideously distended, half-blind, rheumatic and stiff-legged spaniel, with the hair completely gone from its once feathery tail, lay asthmatically wheezing on the steps; while a really prehistoric English bull-dog, so old and fat that he was a marvel to look at, lay at the barn door; both of which animals contributed to the support of the veterinarian.

And when I reflected that in his own stable were two cows, neither of which had given milk or had a calf for over a dozen years, and were worthy contemporaries of Old Tom and the canine Methuselahs, I mentioned these facts to Daniel, expecting to crush him to the earth, like Truth, with the weight of my facts, but not expecting him, like Truth, to rise again.

But Daniel, like a sturdy old patriarch, never blinked an eye. "Just the point, boy, just the point. I suppose those infernal old torments have cost me half of what my place is worth. But what can a man do? They are members of my family, human beings, sir! But don't ever be as big a fool as I have been."

Now Daniel, fond as he is of a horse or cow trade, would n't have sold or traded any one of those old pensioners to have saved his own life. But his advice was sound, and the more I thought of it, the sounder it appeared. I had bought Polly five years before, when she was broken for

double harness only, and I had with great pains made her the best driving horse I ever owned.

As a saddler she had a quick sharp trot that one could sit as easily, almost, as a single-foot. This she could keep up mile after mile, and tire out any of the trained saddlers in town.

She had faults. She was somewhat hard-bitted, very sensitive to ill-treatment, afraid of nothing but firearms and the whip, and would not stand with anything but a neck-hitch, and occasionally, as I have said, brought home a stone post, or a fence-rail, or part of a barn, when the neck-hitch was stronger than the particular real estate to which she was attached.

And so I sold Polly. Sold her for twice what I had given for her five years before. Sold her without any warranty and after full explanations of her failings. Sold her and took my blood-money and went home.

It took me a full hour to break the news to my wife. It took her a much less time to give me her opinion of the transaction. I represented the facts with judicial calmness, and cited Daniel as authority for my position. I am glad Daniel did not hear what she said about him. Its brevity was no measure of its completeness.

My daughter began to cry, and my son left the table in a huff and banged the door. There are few sounds more disquieting to one's nerves than

the more or less justifiable banging of a door when one has done wrong and knows it.

Then I tried unblushing bribery. Neither my wife nor my daughter would have any of it.

Then I went down town and sought the purchaser. He had left town. I sat down and wrote him, explaining the circumstances. It was a dreary two days at home before I got his letter. Then it was drearier, for the letter explained that he had bought the mare to mate up a pair for a Boston man, and had delivered her the day before. He very kindly sent me the address, and I lost no time in writing the Boston man.

His reply I received after a few days. He did not care to sell, as he had the best pair of driving horses in Boston. If I cared to call some day he would be pleased to show me what they could do, and he remained, "Very truly," etc.

It seemed to me that I had got myself into a very serious scrape indeed, especially as the clouds hung very thick over my homestead.

With a part of the price of my treason I bought a new rubber trimmed driving harness, with which I decorated Lady M. And I also had the Concord painted and varnished.

My wife had long urged the purchase of a new harness, and I thought the double outlay might soften her just resentment, but it had absolutely the opposite effect. She refused to ride behind

Lady M., although that animal was a very fair roadster and handsome.

I never drove Lady M. but I missed Polly's quick sharp trot, her pull on the lines, the smooth play of her shoulders, the alert pricked ears, and the regular allegro of her light hoofs.

A few weeks after this I read of an accident in a Boston suburb, where a pair of sorrel horses belonging to a Mr. Lee became frightened at a steam-roller and ran away, overturning the carriage and severely injuring their driver. The account gave the name of the owner and driver, and sure enough it was the Boston man who had bought Polly. I wrote him reminding him of my offer, and received a note from his secretary informing me that both horses had been sent to a sale stable and I could communicate with the proprietor.

The next day I went to Boston, but was again too late. Both horses had been sold to a stranger who paid cash and did not give his name.

Then I gave up the chase and resolved to think no more of Polly, but to do my best to reëstablish my reputation in my homestead.

CHAPTER XXI

THE NEIGHBORHOOD NUISANCE

THE neighborhood to which I had moved was regarded by those long resident there as one of the finest and most exclusive in the town. The houses were large and well-kept, the lawns green and trim, and the grounds spacious. It was peculiar in having a number of very lofty and fine pine trees growing amid a profusion of elms and oaks. This distinction added much to the pride and exclusiveness of the residents, and in fact set them apart from other men. In short, the neighborhood fairly exhaled pride and satisfaction, and not without reason; and when we entered its charmed and sacred precincts we felt that we were *personæ non gratæ*.

Such things do not bother me very much, but they affect my wife's peace of mind exceedingly, who, poor woman, has found in me a very serious handicap to her social aspirations. It is difficult for conservative and semi-bucolic village society to clasp to its bosom with any open show of affection one who views village neighbors and village life with amusement.

Indeed, in the Greek Quarter of the town in which I had spent five happy and amusing years, I was viewed with the utmost suspicion and my wife pitied, because I had committed the entire neighborhood to print, and had made them severally, and, according to the sale of the book, more or less, immortal. And when we moved from that delightful neighborhood we realized that our departure did not affect the price of real estate to any marked degree.

In the next neighborhood where we spent a year, we were not over-popular, because we had long outgrown the cabinet-organ and plush-album stage, and did not regard the cuspidore as a household necessity; nor did I aspire to occupy any of the chairs in the many lodges and secret orders with which the face of our beloved village was thickly speckled.

And so, when I moved to the farm, I made up my mind to view men and things with a more serious eye, and in short, to be good and live happily ever afterwards.

It was hard, however, to break a habit of years. When one has spent the greater part of one's life in seeing the amusing side of men and things, it is hard, desperately hard, to close one's eyes and thoughts to the humorous sights and ideas that association with one's neighbors brings.

And the sight of some of my dignified neigh-

bors pokering their unbending way townwards, brought forcibly to my mind the necessity of in some way ingratiating myself with them if I was to be a valued member of the colony and in good standing. With Daniel the way was open. One view of Daniel's three hundred pounds of good nature was enough to assure any man of a welcome, provided he desired and deserved it.

But the Professors and the wealthy magnate, the retired New Yorker, the two old ladies of a by-gone generation, who still wore lace mitts and side-curls and rather voluminous black silk skirts, and who occasionally screened their fine old faces with small silk parasols with jointed handles, and the two old gentlemen who took pains to inform me that they used to trade with my grandfather, and what a fine courteous old gentleman he was, and how things had changed since his time, — they were more difficult. And when I reflected that the last owner of the farm was a treasurer of the Academy, and a trustee thereof, for many many years superintendent of a Sunday School, and a man of weight (not physical, however, for he was of inconsiderable size) and influence in the community, I realized that comparisons would be, and in all probability had been, drawn, — comparisons which, like comparisons in general, were odious.

It was really quite a serious question. Whether

to go on as I had been doing, and look upon my small corner of the world with a humorous disregard, and attend strictly to my own affairs, the duties of my profession from nine to five, and the cultivation of my soil from five to dark, with the interval of the dinner, or to fairly lay myself out to the entertainment of the neighborhood.

I really wished to be liked by my new neighbors because I wanted to live in the neighborhood and make myself one of them. I wanted to be able to walk in upon them without formality, to have them drop in socially to a pipe or to lunch; to discuss matters of common interest, — the growth of the crops, the relative butter qualities of the Jerseys, the Ayrshires, the Guernseys, and the Belted Dutch; the comparative egg-productiveness of the Minorcas, the Buff Wyandottes, and the Orpingtons; whether Aldrich was a real poet or a graceful dilettante; how many rounds it took Jeffries to put Corbett down and out; who was the first American educator, Old Man Anson or Doctor Eliot, and other matters of bucolic interest.

The best method of attaining this desired end was the thing that occupied me day and night. We could not invite them to our house until they had called, and we were not the people to slight or neglect our old friends for the purpose of obtaining favor with new ones.

I tried various expedients. I purposely let out my hens one day in May, and true to the fiendish nature of these unaccountable bipeds, they instantly departed to a neighbor's garden and excavated huge holes therein. This was my cue to rush in with a whip, drive them back to my own premises, and then with my hired man to work a couple of hours in putting the garden into very much better condition than it ever was in before, to the great approval of the neighbor, who might otherwise have remained in a state of dignified conservatism forever.

Another neighbor's cow got loose, and in one night ate about half of my young sweet corn, where the young plants were six inches high. I carefully piloted the animal home and assured the apologetic owner that the damage was not worth considering, that my horse or cow was liable to get loose any day and do him more damage, and that between neighbors the damage was of no importance whatsoever.

And so in a comparatively short time the idea got abroad that I was not really half as bad as I looked, and that I might in time be really a creditable sort of an acquaintance.

But it was the purchase of the wheelbarrow that really broke down the barriers of distrust and suspicion. When I came there, like all new agriculturists I bought a large number of minor

farming utensils, such as spades, shovels, hoes, a lawn-mower with a hood, forks, a lawn-roller, a scythe, bush-hook and snaths, double-handed saw, hammer, axes, hatchets, and a pigeon-holed box of assorted nails, and last and most important of all, a fine, new, five-dollar-and-fifty-cent wheelbarrow.

To a neighborhood the members of which had for the most part inherited their tools from long-deceased ancestors, an opportunity to borrow new and modern farm implements is a rare opportunity, indeed, and the ice-bound fetters of reserve began to warm up a little and thaw to quite an appreciable extent.

In such a neighborhood a bright, new, sharp hoe is a mighty power to make and keep a friendship; a loanable lawn-mower will impose more respect than the possession of money; a box of assorted nails will do much to atone for the errors of a misspent life; a roller for lawns and gravel-walks wields an immense influence for trust and affection.

But it is a wheelbarrow that inspires love and good-fellowship. It is a wheelbarrow that levels all ranks, buries all hatchets, destroys all enmities, absolves one from all sins of commission and omission past, present and future, makes one a man and a brother, a comrade, a friend, and a trusted neighbor.

Within a month after the purchase of that wheelbarrow I was one of the most popular men in the community, free to borrow anything, from money to elderberry wine, of which the neighborhood had endless store. To me, to my wife, to my children, to my man-servant whom I occasionally hired for a few hours, to my maid-servant of a more permanent nature, to my cattle and the stranger within my gate, that wheelbarrow was the most profitable investment I ever made.

Did I send a pitcher of cream to a neighbor, it was followed in a day or two by a sort of cross-counter in the shape of a box of fresh strawberries. Did I send a setting of eggs from my choicest fowl to another neighbor, he promptly retaliated with a bunch of delicious radishes or a couple of heads of lettuce, and honors were even.

But I had things all my way with the wheelbarrow, for I was the only one on the street who owned one, and so, like the small boy who owns the ball, I was the pitcher on the nine until a new boy came along with a better ball. By these simple and effective means did I remove from my neighbors' minds all suspicions engendered by my past life in other quarters of the town.

Yet the one great exploit that put me into a very warm place in the hearts of my neighbors, was the slaughter of the neighborhood dragon,

the thrashing of the long-time bully of the little community, the clipping of the wings of the village condor or bucolic harpy, that for years had defied public opinion and outraged neighborly good feeling, and whose name was used to terrify refractory children into obedience.

I was warned of this dragon when I bought the farm. I was told that he had made trouble for all his neighbors, was at his worst in litigation, would provoke a saint to retaliation and then prosecute him for it, and keep him on the gridiron of suspense, attending court after court until he wore him out; that, if he wanted anything, he always got it, and that, if he once got down on a man, he was his enemy for life; that he was down on me, — why, I did not know.

These warnings however had no great weight with me. Indeed, they did not trouble me at all. I had never had any trouble with the dragon and saw no reason why I should have.

I had come to the neighborhood with the honest intention of being friendly and accommodating toward all my neighbors. I was genuinely interested in the community. I expected to contribute according to my means to any subscription for neighborly interests; to subscribe my name to any petition addressed to the authorities for the betterment of the local roads and lawns, trees and sidewalks.

At the first sign of foreign invasion I would, and fully intended to, reach down from the wall over the fireplace the old musket and the powder horn that my great-grandfather might have shouldered in the Revolution, had he been patriotic enough to attend that little festivity, and sally forth as did our sires at old Thermopylæ.

Did the boys from other and alien neighborhoods invade with snowballs, green apples, or brickbats, I would send my first-born to do battle, urging him not to come back but upon his shield. Did the young ladies of our neighborhood vie with the Court-Streeters, the Front-Streeters, or with similar young ladies from other quarters of the town, I would cheer hoarsely for our side and contribute lemonade, pickled limes, slate pencils, and other delicacies peculiar to very young ladies.

Did the Decoration Day parade propose any other route of parade than through our street, I would fight their modest appropriation until they acquiesced in the observance of our time-honored rights. Did the street commissioner run his snow-plough over Elliott, Grove, Linden, or Court Street before our street, I would have something to say in relation to that anxious, unhappy, and much-badgered gentleman's reëlection.

In short, I had come to Pine Street prepared to cast my lot with the Pine-streeters, to espouse

their quarrels, to share their joys. In time of war to "cry 'Havoc!' and let loose the dogs of war," or to cry anything else that might be more intelligible to the modern dogs of war, or appropriate to the circumstances. In times of peace, to raise white-winged pigeons as emblematic of the idealistic conditions. And with such peaceful intentions I most certainly did not expect trouble with any one.

The Dragon's name was Cyrus Pettigrew. Not a handsome name, and Cyrus looked his name if any one ever did. He was old and gnarled and dried and wrinkled and rusty. He was mean and skimpy and avaricious and penurious and grasping. He was harsh and sour and contrary and selfish and grumpy.

But I had no fear of trouble. I usually had no trouble with any one. It may have been in a measure due to my profession, for few men care to pick a quarrel with a lawyer. It may have been in a still greater measure due to my avocation, for the men who will risk being embalmed in a newspaper or magazine roast are still more rarely found. Whatever may have been the cause the fact was undisputed. I was a peaceable man and lived a peaceful life.

But the man never lived who could reside next to old Pettigrew and not have trouble with him. Poor old Cyrus, — he is dead now, and, "De

mortuis nil nisi bonum" notwithstanding, I have never found man, woman, or child that would own to a passing regret at Cyrus's departure.

My first meeting with Cyrus as a neighbor was trying. I wanted a new fence between his place and mine, and I sought him one day near the old boundary fence. Cyrus met my proposition very coldly. He didn't want a fence. The fence had been good enough for him and my predecessor for a good many years. And he didn't think much of an interloper who wanted to change everything over.

In vain I argued the necessity of an up-to-date wire fence. Cyrus would have none of it. I finally offered to pay the entire expense. To this Cyrus, who had a sharp nose for a bargain and a pair of exceedingly sharp and far-sighted eyes for his own interest, agreed, although very grumpily.

Having obtained his consent I lost no time in buying posts and wire-fencing, and in hiring a carpenter, sappers, and miners, and starting the work. At this time I was called out of town for a few days, and on my return found to my great pleasure that my new fence had been erected and the carpenter was just leaving. I went out at once to view it and to rejoice in the great improvement, and judge of my disgust and wrath when I found that the grasping old rascal had made the car-

penter put the new fence more than a foot on my land, the whole length of the division line.

After a vigorous speech to the propitiatory carpenter, in the course of which I coined several entirely new objurgations appropriate to the occasion, I jammed my hat to my ears and made for Cyrus's house. I was boiling with rage, and fortunately for us both Cyrus was not at home.

As I came back, better thoughts began to take possession of me. The strip of land was n't worth fighting about. I had made up my mind not to have any row with my neighbors, and here I was, exploding like a paper bag the first time any one got under my guard.

The old scamp had certainly scored on me, but I would keep my eyes open in the future. So I made up my mind to forget it, or at least, if I could not forget it, to take no action and to say no word.

A short time after this, some of my hens got out and into his yard. There was nothing growing at the time, and they certainly did him no damage. But when I came home, I found three dead hens on my side of the fence, that he had shot and thrown over.

This so "riled" me that I promised profanely to have his scalp nailed to my barn-door if it took a leg. But upon sober second thought I dressed the hens, sent them to him by my son

Dick, with a polite note of apology for the trespass, and a promise to look after my hens in the future. I hoped for one of two results from this course. First: that he would be so overcome by my magnanimity that he would seek me out, ask my pardon, and endeavor to be a loyal friend for life. Second: If he did not do this, that a bone of one of those deceased biddies would stick in his gnarly old throat and choke him to death lingeringly and horribly.

Neither result happened, however.

The old wretch had a habit of squinting down the line of the new fence, as if still doubtful if he had got quite as much of my land as he wished; and as he took occasion to do this when I was down in the garden, it was perfectly evident to me that he was trying to aggravate me into hostilities. This I resolved not to allow him to do.

But, alas for my good intentions! trouble came. Dick, a young chap of seventeen, one day went across the line for a baseball that had fallen on old Pettigrew's land. He had to pass nearly to the centre of the old man's garden, littered with dead vines and stubs of last year's corn-stalks, when forth from the barn came the old man on the run, with a heavy whip in his knotted hand, and made directly for Dick, breathing slaughter.

Now, this was a little too much, and in a second I had dropped whatever I had in my hand

and had rushed to the fence with the intention of vaulting it, disarming the old man, and walking him Spanish back to the barn for a little heart-to-heart talk, when a surprising thing happened.

Dick, instead of running, as I supposed he would, — for the spectacle of a man of sixty, armed with a bull-whip and bearing down on one with curses is rather formidable to a boy, — stood quietly, awaiting his approach, with his left hand in his pocket, but with the right hanging at his side clinching the baseball. I was near enough to see a look in his face and a glitter in his eye that I knew meant fight.

Old Pettigrew, seeing that Dick did not retreat, slowed down to a walk, and then stopped.

"Git offer my lan', ye whelp of Satan, or I'll cut ye tew ribbons!" said the old man, with a fearful curse.

"I 'm going to get off your land, Mr. Pettigrew," said Dick; "but if you raise that whip again I'll smash in your old ribs with this baseball and whale you so your old hide won't hold water; now get out of my way!" And he stepped directly toward the old man, who was between him and the fence.

"Don't ye peg that ball at me or I 'll have ye arrested," said the old man, backing precipitately as the young chap approached.

GIT OFFER MY LAN', YE WHELP OF SATAN

Dick said nothing further, but leisurely walked to the fence, vaulted over, and came face to face with me.

"Good boy, Dick!" I said, as he looked up in surprise and some sheepishness at getting caught; "I did think you were in for a warm time."

"Huh!" said Dick, "that old cuss,—I could lick two of him. Hear him swear," he continued.

And indeed the old man was giving the best imitation of the army of Flanders I had ever heard. He danced up and down and threatened every sort of vengeance a distorted mind could think of.

We paid no further attention to the wretched old man, but left him to cool off. I was too much pleased with the unexpected fighting qualities of my first-born to care enough about old Cyrus to listen. To tell the entire truth, I was the least bit disappointed that the old man had backed down so promptly, for I possessed a deal of curiosity to see Dick in action.

A few days afterwards, a dog that occasionally came to the house, an inoffensive, good-natured, trampish animal, was shot on the old man's land and probably by him, although nobody saw him do it. We heard the shot at dinner, heard the agonized yelping of the poor animal, ran out and found him dying in the rear of the old man's house.

Dick and I did not hesitate to go across the line and bring the poor old fellow back. He died before we got him over the fence. Nobody interfered with us, and I think we were both hugely disappointed.

If the old man had appeared I think some one would have been hurt. Nothing makes a man more wolfish than to see a pet shot to death, and dying with wide-open, pleading eyes and panting, choking breath. We buried the poor animal under an apple tree in the orchard.

During the first spring, summer, and fall, old Cyrus exhausted every device to annoy us. In the spring, if the wind blew in the direction of our buildings, on that day he would light a huge bonfire of damp matter and send dense clouds of smoke over us. Finding that this did not annoy us particularly, as the smoke of spring bonfires was very agreeable to us, he would put on an old horse-blanket, a few shovels of stable manure, or a dead hen, and raise a stench that nearly stifled the entire neighborhood.

He never failed to shoot one of my hens if it escaped from the yard and trespassed, but after the first experience I no longer dressed and sent them to him. But on one occasion, when his hens got out and strayed on my premises, I carefully drove them back unhurt, only to be accused of purposely letting them out.

During the second winter he could not annoy me as much, but every mean insinuation that malice could invent or distort, he made. It was in April of the second year that I got him hard and fast, and by the merest chance.

I had in the previous September bought my Jersey cow. I was very particular about her appearance, curried her every day, bedded and blanketed her, and indeed cared for her as well and painstakingly as I did for Polly. The custom of the local farmers was to allow filth to accumulate on their cows' flanks and legs, until it hung from them in crusty scales, to peel off in the spring with the shedding of the old coat. The care I gave my cow made her coat shine like satin, and certainly lent a relish to her milk. In April her old coat became dull and dead, and she began to rub it off her head and neck in patches, disclosing a close new coat of cream-color where the winter coat had been a light chestnut.

One morning, in rubbing her down, I found that with my fingers I could pull the old coat off in tufts, and that she apparently enjoyed having it pulled. Without really thinking of what I was doing, I wrote my initials, H. A. S., on her back by pulling out the dead hair. Seeing how easily I could do this, I drew, or rather pulled, on her side near the curve of the belly, a grotesque figure of a small boy, then a circular brand on her

shoulder, and three X's on her flank. Then I quietly led her to the hitching-post at the side of the house and awaited developments.

In a moment my wife came to the door, with wide-open eyes. "For gracious sake what have you been doing to that cow?" she demanded.

"Oh, nothing," I replied, "that's the way range-cattle are branded. This cow had a good many owners and evidently each one branded her," I further explained.

"It's no such thing," she retorted hotly, "you did it yourself. That explains why she bellowed so this winter."

She had bellowed a good deal when I took away her calf, but I did not say so, for I always liked to get a rise out of my wife.

"I think it is just horrid in you, and about the cruelest thing I ever heard of, and you have just spoiled her looks."

Now out of the corner of my eye I could see old Cyrus peering over the fence and listening gloatingly to the conversation. After giving him time to satisfy himself thoroughly, I led the cow back to the barn, followed by my wife, and there illustrated the matter by drawing on the off-side of the animal a serpent and a circular brand, while that delighted animal stood with eyes half closed in ecstasy.

Much relieved and amused, my wife went back

to the house, laughing over the ridiculously decorated animal.

After milking the Jersey, I led her out and tethered her in the sun in full view of old Cyrus's premises, and finished my breakfast. On my return to lunch I was informed by my wife that the old man had been looking at the cow from over his fence, in company with several men, to whom he was talking with excited gestures.

This amused me so much that I laughed loudly. But I did not for a moment anticipate the far-reaching results of my joke. I only thought it an excellent joke on the old man, as it had been on my wife and my daughter and Dick.

That night I was to give a lecture in a neighboring town, and departed on the afternoon train, intending to return in the morning. I had an excellent audience, an enthusiastic reception, and a very flattering introduction. Just as I had made my bow and was about to begin, a man whom I knew to be a deputy sheriff stepped on the platform, placed his hand on my shoulder, and informed me that I was under arrest.

I am sure I was never so astonished in my life. If the audience had suddenly risen in the air like the card people in "Alice in Wonderland," I should not have been more surprised; nor do I believe the audience would have been,

for his words were perfectly audible and he was well known to them.

For a full minute I must have stood staring at him. Then I asked for his warrant, and he handed me one. I opened it and found it was regularly issued by a justice on a complaint signed by old Cyrus Pettigrew, charging me with "cruelty in burning, cutting, branding, and otherwise torturing a certain Jersey cow then and there in my charge and custody, or wilfully permitting and allowing said animal then and there in my custody as aforesaid to be burned, cut, branded or otherwise tortured."

In a flash the whole scheme dawned on me and I could not help admiring the old rascal's devilish ingenuity in planning the details, and at the same time his inevitable disgust and fury when the truth was known.

In the meantime I was in the most unpleasant and ridiculous position imaginable; but one's mind works quickly, and I instantly told the audience that I was arrested for cruelty to animals, that if they would kindly watch the papers for the outcome of the trial, which I was sure would be interesting to them, and defer judgment to that time, I would fill my engagement and finish my lecture.

The audience applauded, the sheriff took a seat on the platform, grinning good-naturedly,

and I began my lecture. I was thoroughly keyed up to the occasion, and so filled with laughter as the possibilities of the situation dawned on me, that my lecture was really very funny, and, as the audience said, exceedingly entertaining. Indeed, at its close they crowded about me with offers of bail or assistance of any kind.

I thanked them most heartily, and, accompanied by the deputy, went to my hotel, where I engaged a room with two beds, he having very indulgently agreed to stay with me at a hotel rather than to load me with chains and incarcerate me in the local lock-up, which was indeed very good of him. I chuckled to myself to see the care with which he chose the bed nearer the door, looked at the fastenings of the windows, locked the door, and put the key under his pillow.

And so, after undressing, I lay down peaceably on the other bed, and having no guilty conscience, fell asleep. I am afraid my keeper did not sleep as soundly as I did, for I have a vague recollection of his lighting the gas several times during the night, and peering at my recumbent form, to see if I was really there.

And thus did we spend the night.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DISCOMFITURE OF CYRUS

IN the morning, after a bath, which I took, but which the deputy declined, we went downstairs to breakfast, where I was stared at by the few early guests, who evidently considered me a very desperate character indeed, and where I was obliged to decline several interviews with reporters, to whom I told nothing beyond urging them to attend the trial, which I told them would probably be continued to the next week, as I should ask for time to prepare my case thoroughly.

The morning papers had accounts of the arrest, with comments upon my personality. Upon returning home, I went at once to the court-room, where I found Cyrus and his counsel and a crowd awaiting me.

I waived the reading of the complaint, pleaded not guilty, and asked for a continuance of one week. To this the prosecuting attorney entered a most vigorous objection, and argued the matter at great length, — to no purpose, however,

as my request was reasonable and proper. I was held in bail of five hundred dollars, — although the attorney, urged on by old Cyrus, asked for five thousand, — and hurried home to explain matters.

My first anxiety was to secure the cow from examination, as I did not want the prosecution to find out the truth and spoil the fun. I found that one or two had called to see the cow, but that Dick had kept the barn locked.

The week I spent before the trial was one of the queerest and most amusing, and at times uncomfortable, I had ever spent in my life. The papers devoted a good deal of space to me, and evidently considered me a rather hopeless case. Indeed, to judge from the talk of my fellow citizens, I had been a whited sepulchre, a wolf in sheep's clothing and several other objectionable things, for a long time. Much to my pleasure, my neighbors, to a man, stood by me. I suppose they considered that of two evils, I, as the newest comer, could not be as bad as old Cyrus, or one tenth as bad as he painted me.

The day before the trial my wife was, to her intense indignation, summoned as a witness by the prosecution. Although as my wife she could not be compelled to testify against me, I persuaded her to waive her rights and to testify, telling her how great a compliment they paid her

in being willing to assume that she would tell the truth even if it sent her helpmeet to a felon's cell.

The great day arrived, and there was vast excitement in our midst. I had never been tried for my life or liberty before, and naturally woke early and ate but little breakfast. I drank, however, two cups of strong coffee, and after breakfast went to the stable to arrange with Pat to bring my main witness, the cow, to the court at the proper time. I had bought a handsome blanket for her, and before Pat put it on I examined her carefully. Although she had shed a considerable amount of hair during the week, the letters and figures were as distinct as ever.

Then, giving Pat instructions to wait until sent for, and on no account to let any one examine her or lift the blanket, and arming him with a long whip to enforce my commands, I started for the court-house with my devoted family. As we approached the edifice, we saw an immense crowd gathered around the door and steps and sidewalk.

Cameras clicked and snapped and took our lineaments and our widely divergent, joint and several proportions, to their secret recesses; impertinent strangers climbed on one another's shoulders and stared and voted us generally a bad lot, and frowned and sneered when our

friends, or some of them, smiled and wished us luck.

It took the entire police posse to force an entrance to the court-room, and after we had taken seats the prosecuting attorney began his opening address, upon which he had spent the entire week. He pictured me as a monster, a bloodless, cruel, devilish vampire, a man with a heart barred to every human impulse, with blood as cold as an iceberg. He pictured the meek, mild, gentle cow, made for man's delight, for woman's happiness, for children's life and welfare, thrown roughly to the floor, pinioned and helpless, while the cruel, scorching, red-hot branding-irons burned their relentless way into her shrinking, palpitating tissues, leaving their shameful brand like the mark of Cain or the Scarlet Letter. He said, — but perhaps it is unnecessary to repeat all he said; but at the close of his address the audience turned from me with loathing, or glared at me with baleful eyes, and my wife, on hearing her name called as the first witness, jumped as if some one had jabbed her with a hat pin.

Mrs. Shute, being sworn, testified that she was the wife of the respondent, that she lived with him on Pine Street, that he was perfectly sane and responsible, and had never acted queerly, — no, sir! he certainly had not; that he kept a Jer-

sey cow, — that it was bought the year before that there were no marks nor brands on it then, nor later; that she first saw them a week ago; the marks were, on the left side, Mr. Shute's initials, H. A. S., a circular brand on the shoulder, three X's on the flank, and on the right side a serpent and a circular brand; that they were put there during the winter, — by her husband as he said; that she had heard the cow bellowing not long before — about the time they sold the calf; supposed it was that; never saw any branding-irons; Mr. Shute could have had them without her knowledge; did get angry and scolded her husband; did say it was the cruelest thing he ever did.

Mrs. Shute was excused, Mr. Shute not asking her any questions.

By this time the audience were ready to applaud a death-sentence.

Dr. LePelletier was sworn: Was a veterinarian; made an examination of cow; found her covered with brands; must have been made with red-hot irons; must have caused great agony to her; bellowing was undoubtedly caused by torture; cicatrices very plain; hair never would grow again because hide burned through; marks could not be removed except by skinning cow; marks were not on cow the preceding autumn.

Cross-examined: Not nearer the cow than

across the fence — about two rods; could not have been mistaken; marks made with branding-irons or red-hot end of iron; cows sometimes bellow when calf taken from them; called to view cow by Mr. Pettigrew; very nice man, Mr. Pettigrew.

Dr. LePelletier stepped down.

At the close of the doctor's testimony the audience showed their feelings quite plainly, and evidently considered burying me at a cross-road with a stake through my heart as the least thing that could be done under the circumstances.

Cyrus Pettigrew, sworn. Cyrus made the responses to the oath with great vigor and distinctness. Was a neighbor; saw cow when she was bought, and every day until winter; saw her last eight days ago; branded all over, — horribly; described marks at great length: large scars of burning; heard cow bellowing dreadfully a short time before; pounding in stable; sounded like struggle; Mr. Shute a man of ungovernable temper, very profane; boy takes after his father; heard Mrs. Shute complain of Mr. Shute's brutality to the cow; she was very angry at it; heard him say he did it; heard her call him a cruel man; remembered smelling burning hair and flesh at different times during the winter; heard bellowing; did not go over because did not wish to intrude; did n't imagine a man could

be so cruel; had no interest in case except to stop brutality.

Cross-examination: Did n't have any trouble over fence; moved fence over because it belonged there; did shoot hens because they did damage; hens can do damage in winter; did eat them when they were sent him; did not shoot dog; was shot on his land; don't know who did it; saw respondent and son there with dog; could not say but they did it; did try to drive respondent's son off land; had whip in hand; did n't strike boy because only wanted to scare him; might have said some things to boy; boy was "sassy"; was never convicted of girdling trees of neighbor.

Violent objection by counsel for prosecution, who demanded to know whether or not witness had any rights, and whether or not we were living in "Rooshia."

Objection overruled by court, who decided for counsel's benefit that we were still in America.

Witness ordered to answer: Was not convicted; was arrested once on false charge; did pay some money to help neighbor out; did n't remember how much; never had trouble with neighbors; had shot Professor Miller's hens; Professor Miller did not make any trouble; had some students arrested once; students were discharged; was sure marks on cow were made by hot iron; could see scars; had no ill-will toward

respondent; had given warrant to deputy in evening; gave him no instruction except where to find respondent; knew respondent was to give lecture; did tell deputy to arrest at once; did not tell deputy he was a damned fool to let respondent finish lecture; may have said something like that.

At the close of the cross-examination of old Cyrus, it was plain to see that he had not helped the prosecution much, but had created a distinctly bad impression, and that the audience would be satisfied with plain electrocution.

The prosecuting attorney then demanded that the cow be brought in as a witness, and said that, inasmuch as he had served a *subpœna duces tecum* upon me, and the object of the *duces tecum* had not appeared, he moved for an attachment for contempt.

In reply I purged myself of contempt by assuring the court that the cow was then and there *in transitu*, and I should call her as my first witness. The prosecution then rested, and I asked the court to take a recess for five minutes, when I would be ready. In less than that time Dick, who had left the court-room, returned, saying that the cow was in the square in front of the building, and I asked the court to adjourn to the square for a view.

This was done, the audience piling out like

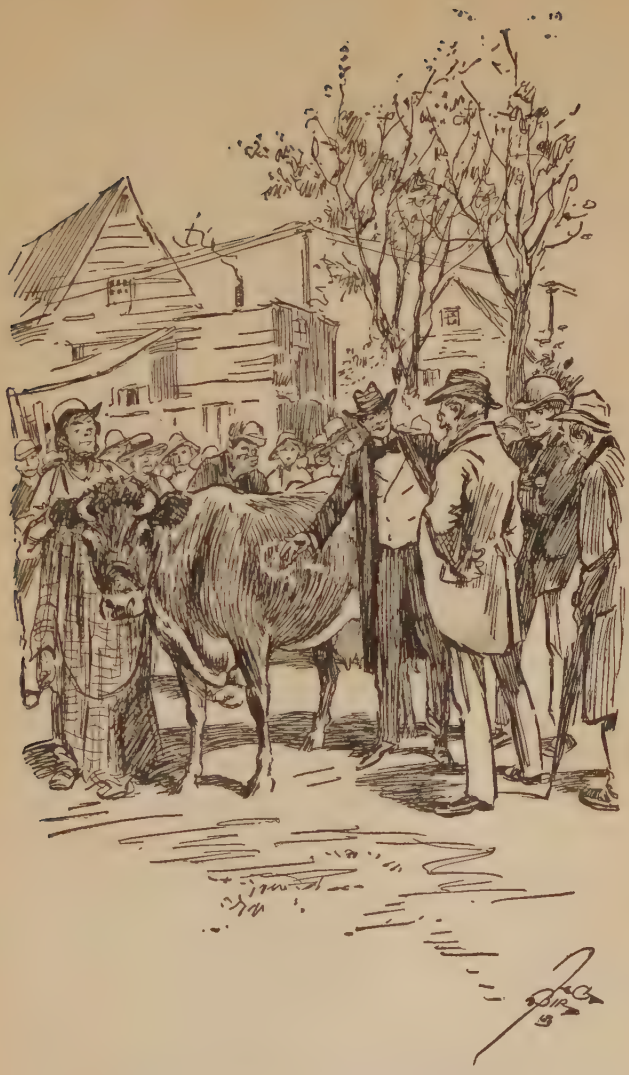
school-boys. Arrived in the square, a dense crowd had collected about the Jersey, who, blanketed and guarded by two burly Irishmen, stared inquiringly about until she saw me, when she gave a soft moo of recognition. With some difficulty the officers cleared a large ring, in the centre of which stood the cow, Mike, Pat, the honorable Court, the respondent, the complainant, the attorney for the prosecution.

I then addressed the court as follows: "May it please the Court; I now propose to demonstrate by the clearest evidence possible how far the malicious ingenuity of a vicious old man, and a bad neighbor, will go to make trouble for a person who never did him an unkindness, — in short that the cow never was hurt or tortured or branded; that the whole thing was an innocent joke, a fool joke perhaps, but one that never hurt or injured any one or anything."

I then stripped off the blanket, and there in plain sight were the various marks on the cow's hide. At my request the court and the attorney ran their hands over her and found no scars.

"Now, to show your Honor how these marks were made —"

"It is unnecessary," said the court, "I have owned cows myself, and perhaps I can illustrate as well as you"; and stepping forward, with rapid hands he fashioned upon her side the word



THE WHOLE THING WAS AN INNOCENT JOKE

"Stung," at which there was a roar of delight and appreciation from the crowd. "Respondent discharged," he continued, "and court is adjourned."

At the close of the formalities I held an impromptu reception in the square and shook hands with several hundred people. But before an hour had elapsed I had issued a *Capias* for old Cyrus in a fifty-thousand-dollar suit for malicious prosecution.

In vain he tried to get bail; nobody would bail him, and that night for the first time in his life, perhaps, he slept in jail. The April term was in progress and my suit could not be entered until October, and in the event of not obtaining bail he would have to remain in jail until October.

The next day he sent for me. I refused to see him. The day after he sent me a written appeal. I threw it in the waste-basket. The third day an old acquaintance of his, and one whom he had wronged, called and begged me to give him a chance. I made him wait a few days. By this time the old man's appeals were abject.

At the end of a week I went to see him. He had aged terribly in that week, and I could n't help pitying him. But I was cold and stern and firm, and before I left I had a sworn statement from him of certain things that would have brought him perilously near state prison, but

which I promised not to use as long as he behaved himself.

I then withdrew my suit, and he came from jail a thoroughly humbled and broken-spirited old man. He did not remain in Exeter long, but as soon as he could sell his property left the state. He died a year or so ago in a distant state. Poor old chap! I have sometimes wondered if I were not a bit too hard on him. Perhaps I was.

CHAPTER XXIII

A RETURN

IT was a beautiful afternoon in August about three years after I bought my farm, and I was sitting in my office idly watching the people passing in the square, and wondering why I did not hear from Dick, who was on a vacation and had not written me for ten days. I missed him and missed his letters, which were bright, gossipy, and full of happy observations on passing events.

Dick had greatly disappointed me by firmly standing out against a college course, and by entering my office for the study of law. But in the office he was so apt and helpful, so good-natured and so studious, that I felt that perhaps he was right after all, and I had been looking forward to the day when his name might be on my sign, — so selfish do old men get when their interests are concerned.

I felt reasonably sure about Dick. He was by no means a goody-goody, had a quick temper, was more than a bit mulish, but well-disposed and rather ambitious. He was well-liked by his

acquaintances, and popular in a jovial, good-fellow-sort of way with the girls. While he had taken them to dances and entertainments, called on them, serenaded them with close-harmonied quartettes and glee-clubs, he had never shown any serious preference for any particular girl, and always when talking with me of his girl acquaintances had been frank and confidential. He was emphatically a boy to trust in such matters, and I felt very confident that he would never make a fool of himself over any girl or woman.

On this day I was feeling remarkably at peace with the world. Business had been good, and fairly remunerative, the farm was prospering. I had eaten strawberries from my own patch until I could eat no more, raspberries and currants from my own bushes, all the early vegetables in season. My hens had laid wonderfully well, and the young cockerels were beginning to crow, my homing pigeons and black, smooth-legged tumblers had been prolific. In fact, a season of unprecedented peace and prosperity had enveloped my little farm as a garment.

The afternoon mail came, and I lazily looked it over. There was little of importance save a letter from Dick. I put that aside for a moment while I dictated replies to the business letters, and then, while the click of the typewriter in the inner room disturbed the summer silence, I leaned

back to enjoy Dick's letter, but promptly sat up with a jerk as I read this brief but astonishing message.

Aug. 6, 190–

DEAR OLD MAN,—I have drawn on you for two hundred and fifty dollars. Please honor draft as I must have the money. Will explain everything when I get home which will be on Thursday next at about six o'clock. I am not coming alone, for I shall bring a young lady with me. You cannot help loving her as I do.

Yours,

DICK.

I looked out on the square without seeing anything. Then I took up the letter again; but the page shook so I could n't read a word. I took a turn round the office, gulped down a glass of water, took a fierce grasp of myself, and this time read the letter through from date to signature. Then I sat in the window trying to realize it. Dick married! to a girl I had never seen, or heard of, and knew nothing about! Perhaps to a designing, elderly woman, possibly a widow, who knew how to marshal her attractions so as to bewilder and dazzle a boy of nineteen. What would become of his future, his law studies, his partnership with me, our joint productions in the way of briefs, declarations, rejoinders, sur-

rejoinders, rebutters, and sur-rebutters, our division of respectable if not fat fees, our enjoyment of an honorable and solid if not brilliant reputation as country attorneys, our joint productions as amateur agriculturists in the way of fruits, vegetables, staple products, and live-stock?

What was to become of my ambition to retire one day from active work in office, court, farm, and garden, and to hand over the sceptre of authority to my son Dick? What was to become of — Oh, damn it all! hang all designing women, all languishing, ogling, curl-shaking, deceptive, false, dangerous widows!

And Dick had done this! Dick! who had always been frank and square with me. Dick had married, a nobody, perhaps, a girl whom we might not be able to take to our hearts or our house. Why was n't the law different? Why did n't we live in Germany or France or Russia or in some sensible country where boys of nineteen could n't contract marriage without their parents' consent?

Well, I must face it, we must all face it; I would pay the draft, but if Dick thought he was going to bring a squint-eyed Jezebel to my house for me to support; if Dick really expected to have me provide food, clothing and lodging for any gray-haired fairy he was ass enough to fall in love with; if Dick was banking on the probability

that my wife and I would step down and out for the first female harpy that managed to get her veteran claws through his donkey's hide, — why, Dick would have a chance to learn something come Thursday evening at about six.

No, he should not come home, danged if he should! I would write him at once. "Here! Miss Blank!" I yelled so loudly to my stenographer that, for the first time in her office-life perhaps, she came into my room without running her hand through her fluffy foretop or settling her belt. "Take this down at once! No, I 'll write it myself." Where shall I address the idiot? Just like him; no address given, — letter posted in Boston. On his honeymoon in Boston, with my two hundred and fifty dollars. Well, he would find mighty little honeymoon after he got home with his superannuated old helpmeet. And I broke into such hearty maledictions that the stenographer tiptoed to her door and softly closed it.

Then I went home with my letter and read it to my wife. She had recourse to tears, then reproaches, then hysterics. I thought I had carried on badly enough, but she showed me a few new things in that line. It was I who was to blame. It was I who had allowed him too much liberty. It was I who had sent him to that horrid summer resort, and had furnished him with money to spend on horrid old false-fronted widows. And

did Dick think he was going to bring that woman home for her to work for? Well she guessed not! And did that woman think — Well, it is not advisable to disclose all she said. In view of later developments we both have reconsidered many conclusions that we arrived at that day, and have been truly sorry for some things we said; but allowing for the excitement under which we labored, and the sudden dashing of our hopes to the ground, some allowance should be made for us both.

We were however firmly of the opinion that she was at least forty, wore a false front, rouge, pearl-powder, and high-heeled shoes, and laced to suffocation. It was thought best to acquaint Gramp and Dick's uncles and aunts with the circumstances, and they were nearly as much affected, and in somewhat the same way, as we were. His aunts wept bitterly, while his uncles, following Gramp's distinguished leadership, painted some of the most vivid word-pictures I ever saw or heard. I really was quite ashamed of my feeble efforts after hearing theirs.

For the next few days I thought of the matter constantly. I slept badly and dreamed hideous dreams. My wife went about with red eyes and woe-begone countenance. My daughter was the only one who viewed the matter in the proper spirit. She looked at it with unjaundiced eyes,

and looked forward with anticipation to a new sister. Indeed, after a few days I found myself wondering if I had not been a bit hasty. Perhaps after all she might not be so bad. Suppose she was young and pretty and dutiful? It would n't be at all bad. Suppose, after a time, a granddaughter or grandson arrived? Well, I always had loved my babies, and I guess I would make a pretty good grandpa after all, and Dick could have the large east front room for a sitting-room, and the small bedroom adjoining. I had practised law long enough to know the folly of anticipating a judgment. I was an ass, a venerable long-eared ass. I would venture to bet she was young and pretty. Dick was no fool. He may have been a bit imprudent, but who wanted an icicle for a son? I would n't give a cent for a boy who would n't be carried off his feet provided the right girl came along. I was wrong, I had been an ass. I guess it would be a good idea to paint and paper those rooms, and to get a new rug for the floor and a chiffonier with long, wide drawers. Women liked them, and I guess Dick's wife should have them if she wanted them. The best was none too good for Dick, and Dick's wife was going to be treated about as well as he. I saw a handsome fur rug that would n't look at all badly in front of their fireplace. Perhaps she had better choose these things. Yes, there was no doubt

of it, — I would wait. But we would welcome her all the same, for she was Dick's wife.

. . . . . .

It was Thursday afternoon, and we were waiting for Dick and his wife to arrive. I had shaved and put on my newly-pressed summer suit; my wife had on a white duck suit and white tennis shoes, my daughter wore the same. I sat under a tree reading a newspaper; a couple of law books lay opened at my feet. I had n't read them, and did n't intend to read them, and did n't care a hang what they contained. Only it would be a good idea to let Dick's wife know just what sort of a family she was entering. If she was well-bred, she would feel more at home, and if she was ill-bred, forward, or conceited, it would perhaps be as well to impress her in the first place so as to keep her from undue self-assertiveness.

As I sat there pretending to read, but in reality not seeing a line or a word of the page, I began again to be depressed about the prospect of an addition to the family that would at best be thoroughly unwelcome both to my wife and to me, and, more unfortunately, to Dick. A boy of his age would not be likely to be attracted by a young and refined girl, because Dick was certainly young, and for a boy, rather refined and fastidious, and he would be all the more liable to be impressed by the coarser and more mature

charms of an altogether impossible person, only, alas! to find out his fatal mistake too late.

It was only too true: Dick was an ass, and my first impressions were too likely to be true. Hang the women! hang 'em!! hang 'em!!!

In spite of my disgust, anger, and deep depression, I could not restrain a smile as I suddenly beheld Gramp appear on his piazza across the street, got up as Gramp generally gets himself up on festal occasions, regardless, not of expense but of appearances. He had put on an old-fashioned black broadcloth coat with tails, — one of those perfectly dreadful coats that make a respectable man look like a composite picture of a pirate, a Methodist parson of the old school and a faro-dealer. He had neglected to change his trousers, and wore an old pair of an indescribable color, — a sort of greenish brown garnished with grease spots, — and ending in an old pair of shoes run down at the heel, cracked across the tops and sides, and gray with ashes.

The costume, topped by a rusty black felt hat at a rakish angle on his snow-white hair, and further ornamented by a new clay pipe, made of the old gentleman a rather fierce but very fine-looking old chap.

Beside him sat two of Dick's aunts, as usual, well and quietly dressed, and looking like thoroughbreds, all evidently conscious of the vital

necessity of a first impression. None of the uncles were present, they having rather forcibly expressed their disgust with the whole proceedings.

As it drew near six o'clock, I could sit still no longer and walked to the hedge and looked down the street. Suddenly, from the opposite direction, I heard the rapid thud of a horse's feet, — a quick short snappy trot that seemed strangely familiar. I turned and stared, and there whirled round the corner a sorrel mare with head up, mane and tail flying, going like the wind, and drawing a light buggy in which sat a young man grinning delightedly and holding the flying mare with the coachman's grip. Shades of immortal Cæsar! it was Dick driving Polly, — Polly for whom I had hunted so long and vainly!

I was never so completely taken aback in my life, and stood blankly with my mouth open like a "plumb idjut." On the piazza my wife and daughter stood like people bereft of sense, until suddenly Nathalie's voice rang out: "Father! father! It's Polly! Dick's got Polly!"

By this time Dick had pulled up, jumped to the ground, thrown the reins over Polly's back, and had come forward to greet us.

"Well, old man," he said, "what do you think of my young lady?"

"You infernal young rascal!" I sputtered; "I

have been frightened into good behavior for a week. I thought you were married to a woman fifty years old and fat as a toad."

And then we fell on him, and thumped and pump-handled him, and patted Polly, who was as glad to get back as we were to see her; and then we dragged Dick in to supper and demanded explanations instantly on penalty of life and limb, and without benefit of clergy.

And Dick told how he had seen Polly one day pass through a suburb of Boston, and had followed on foot and by car, and had finally located her and had bought her after considerable dickering, for he soon found out that her unpleasant habit of halter-pulling had cheapened her considerably in the estimation of her owner. As to the buggy and harness he said he had always wanted a new buggy and harness, and he thought I would not mind if he bought them.

Mind! the young scamp,—if he had known how much I really would have been willing to give to get him out of the scrape I fancied he was in, he could have stocked up with an automobile.

CHAPTER XXIV

LOOKING BACKWARD

SIX years have passed since I bought my farm, — years that have brought me hard work and but little more than a comfortable living in my profession. But the genuine pleasure I have experienced and the physical benefit I have derived from the cultivation of my tiny farm, have much more than repaid me for the many annoyances and losses in time and money my ill-directed but well-meant efforts have cost me.

True, I have not arrived at that point where experienced farmers ask my advice in matters pertaining to the cultivation of the soil, the breeding of domestic animals, the relative advantage of top-dressing and sub-soiling, or other disputed questions in agricultural affairs.

I have not even arrived at the distinguished honor of being a recognized contributor to an agricultural paper: my only contribution, which was written in a jocose spirit, was sent back with great promptness, with a note from the editor expressing an opinion decidedly adverse to the

admission of the article on the ground that "The flippant and puerile spirit pervading the whole article does not accord with the dignity of the paper or the importance of the subject."

But I have afforded amusement for my neighbors, my friends and the public generally by the variety of my experiences, and — Well, a person who creates amusement for the public is not wholly useless in this world, and so I feel that I have done something for others. Besides, there are many persons who have actually added materially to their income from my farming and gardening operations.

I have bought cows and horses, hens and pigs, fertilizers and fruit trees, deodorizers and disinfectants, cedar posts and wire-netting, patent feeders and patent foods, and have, for each and every horse, hen, pig, bag, barrel, and other article, paid somewhat over the market price.

I have exchanged, dickered, traded, bartered, and trafficked in these same articles, and have, I believe, invariably been worsted in these encounters; and so I feel that I have in a double measure been of benefit to my friends and acquaintances, by contributing liberally to the joy of the community and to its financial welfare.

Now, what have I done for myself? I have to a great extent lost my irritability. I have opened a large house to my friends and guests, have had

my table furnished with my own vegetables, eggs, milk, cream, and butter, and adorned from spring to fall with my own flowers.

I have brought my farm to a high state of fertility, hardened my hands, strengthened my muscles, cured my indigestion, and benefited every member of my family, and I have never neglected in any way the duties of my profession.

It is a gray afternoon near the end of November, and I am driving Polly hitched to a farm wagon. In the back of the wagon in a rack, straw-bedded, is a beautiful Jersey heifer. Behind, loping easily along, comes the little roan Indian pony, upon which, sitting easily on a cross saddle, is my once small daughter, now a girl of fourteen, riding with the ease and abandon of a cavalryman.

The roads are hard and smooth, the going excellent. Polly is ambitious and spins along at a spanking pace, but cannot shake off the smooth-gaited pony. A chill wind blows from the north, the dry rushes at the river's edge bend and rustle eerily, a little gray bird with jerking tail flies in and out of the dead bushes, while overhead a single crow, black against the gray sky, wings its way toward a growth of giant pines that shoulder to shoulder seem to defy the coming assaults of the storm king.

As we pass the first bridge, down the steely course of the river comes a muffled figure, while the ring of the skates strikes sharply on the silent air.

It is dusk as we whirl into the yard and pull our horses up, — dusk and chill with the cold breath of the dying year. Take our lantern and follow us as we unhitch Polly and lead her and the pony into the stable. As we enter, a pedigreed Jersey, from her warm and bedded stall, turns her head with its fringed ears and soft eyes, and lows comfortably. We blanket our horses, bed them deeply, then climb to the loft, where we throw down English hay, raised on my farm. The heifer, unbound and dragged to a well-bedded pen, stares about her in surprise at her comfortable quarters, then, pricking up her ears and elevating her tail, prances awkwardly.

Our wagon is pulled into the carriage-house, the doors of the barn closed and locked, and we go next to the hen-coops. We carefully empty the water-cans, close the shutters to the windows, see that the ventilators are open and the fowls all at roost, and that none are sick, then pass on to another pen. In the little room at the entrance to the coop are many ribbons won at poultry shows, among them some blue ribbons.

Then to the storehouse, where we see that the fastenings of the doors are firm. We cannot help

flashing a lantern over the bins filled with apples, corn, cabbages, potatoes, turnips, and carrots, raised on our own place.

As we come from the storehouse and fasten the door, night has fallen, the wind is moaning about the buildings, and a few flakes of snow, the advance-guard of the storm, come sifting silently down. We extinguish our lantern, and faintly in the gathering darkness we can make out the dead corn-stalks standing like ghosts of departed summer, while through the black mass of the clustered pines the wind moans drearily.

Without all is cold and dark and dreary. Within all is bright and warm and comfortable. Summer is gone, but she will come again. Now for the winter and our fire and books. And locking arms with my daughter, I enter and shut out the gathering storm.